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(*See* p. 214.)

LONDON'S FOREST

Its History, Traditions, and Romance

WRITTEN & ILLUSTRATED

BY

PERCIVAL J. S. PERCEVAL

LONDON: J. M. DENT & CO.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

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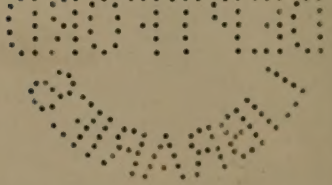

TO

THE COMMONERS

WHO FOUGHT TO MAINTAIN THEIR FORESTAL PRIVILEGES

TO

THE VILLAGERS

WHO BOLDLY UPHELD THEIR "LOPPING" RIGHTS

TO

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON

WHO NOBLY RESCUED FOR THE PEOPLE

THE LAST REMNANT

OF THE ONCE GREAT FOREST OF ESSEX

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

STOCKS, HAVERING-ATTE-BOWER. (*See* p. 90.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As no work had been written upon the Essex Forest which combined the technical information contained in the late Mr. R. Fisher's most excellent *Forest of Essex* with the romance and tradition in which the forest abounds, the author in this work—which is not intended to compete with the various Guides to the Forest—has endeavoured to tell the romantic history of that forest and the topographical, historical, and official connection which the City of London bears to the forest, and thereby to awaken a greater interest in the unique fragment of natural forest which is the heritage of the citizens of London.

To tell that story in a sufficiently full and technical manner to satisfy those who are really desirous of information, while not to unduly burden those who wish to be instructed merely by being entertained, has been the aim of the author in this work.

From the mass of material supplied by research

at the British Museum, the Record Office, the Guildhall Record Office, Library and Museum, and the Reference Libraries of Leyton, West Ham, and Colchester, a choice has been made of such information and anecdote which serve best to explain or emphasise the local colour and atmosphere of forestal life throughout the centuries.

Full use has been made of any work which bears upon the subject, and the author tenders his best acknowledgments and thanks to the authors of those works, to Dr. Sharpe of the Guildhall Record Office, to Mr. Sainyer, Clerk to the Epping Forest Committee, and to the various gentlemen of the above-mentioned institutions for their unfailing courtesy and help.

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COMMEMORATION OAK.

(*See* p. 91.)

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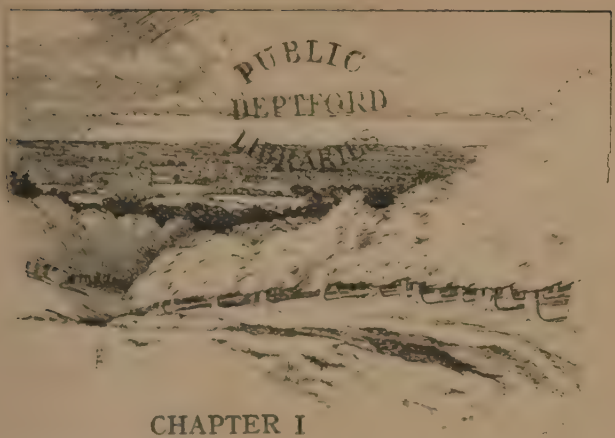
OLD INNS, EPPING. (*See* p. 126.)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CHAPTER I

LONDON'S CONNECTION WITH THE FOREST TOPOGRAPHICALLY AND HISTORICALLY CONSIDERED

> I loved the forest walks and beechen woods
> Where pleasant Stockdale showed me far away
> Wild Enfield Chase and pleasant Edmonton.
> While giant London, known to all the world,
> Was nothing but a guess among the trees,
> Though only half a day from where we stood.
> Such is ambition! only great at home
> And hardly known to quiet and repose.

Thus John Clare, a one-time Epping Forest poet, contrasts the present home of the civilised race—a vast city, with the abode of man's savage progenitors—the recesses of the primeval forest. The spirit of devotion for the woods, which breathes through the simple expression of the poet, is akin to "that hereditary spell of forests," which Robert

Louis Stevenson describes as acting "on the mind of man who still remembers and salutes the ancient refuge of his race."

Such a refuge once was London. Indeed she makes her first claim on history as a mere stockade in the woods—the Llyndin of the ancient Britons. Her wood and fen and heath, with the sweet country which once surrounded her, have disappeared, while a part only of the Essex Forest remains to recall the once great forest of the East Saxon Kingdom, which had Lundentune for its port and ecclesiastical centre.

The forest, however, has maintained its connection with the metropolis; it is essentially London's forest to-day, and will ever be an integral part of her future, holding as it does a unique place among the forests of England and of the Empire.

It is London's own; bought by her corporation, preserved and managed by them; visited by thousands and ten thousands of her toilers and visitors, her recreation ground for all time, acquired by the sums raised by the Grain Metage upon all corn imported into London, a tax, insignificant in itself—merely three-quarters of a farthing in the hundredweight—yet producing the wealth from which the corporation were enabled to set aside over a quarter of a million of money for its purchase.

The forest lies at London's door, skirting the

north-eastern suburbs in the county of Essex. Its nearest point, measured from the Stock Exchange, but five miles away; its farthest extremity less than twenty. Viewed on the map, its boundary line is both irregular and erratic; yet discounting outlying fragments, the main body preserves a curve from Manor Park to Epping—an elongated crescent twenty miles from horn to horn, with a breadth, measured due east and west at its widest part, of two miles, dwindling in places to a few score of yards—an eloquent reminder of past encroachments.

Six thousand acres of the once royal forest of Waltham remain in the Epping section with about eight hundred acres rescued of late years in the Hainault section to form London's Arcadia in the east.

Epping Forest is not a London County Council park, whose natural features are preserved with metalled roads and gravelled paths to make easy the way of recreators. It is what it claims to be—a forest; a strip of wild woodland, whose paths, but trodden tracks, lose themselves in a maze of wanderings, now amid the groves, now through heath and bracken fern, now through the moist beds of tiny rivulets, to discover pool and pond.

Both hill and dale are clothed with pollarded hornbeam, centuries old. Upon the dry uplands flourish the beech, the finest trees of the forest.

The oaks are in a minority; giant trees but few; the oldest, the decaying Fairmead Oak, round

Victoria Beeches, High Beach.

whose mighty base have thronged thousands of sporting Londoners in the days of the famous Easter hunt. Rugged old crab-apple trees—favourites with the deer for their sour fruit—are here in goodly numbers. Blackthorn affords dense impenetrable brushwood, and a sanctuary for the birds. Beautiful young birches—not seen here by Londoners of bygone days—are rapidly converting former unsightly clearances for cultivation into groves of fairy-like beauty; while a growing feature of the forest is the holly—that sturdy defender of sapling beech and oak, which is quite indifferent to the smoke blown into the forest from the metropolis.

The forest has few flowers, for the city flower-vendor has taken heavy toll of its floral beauties in the past, and well-nigh stripped it of flowering plants. The hawthorn and the willow, the gorse and the broom, unite with the wild rose and the honeysuckle to provide floral treasures for multitudes of poor children who, through the agency of the Fresh Air Fund or School Treat, are enabled to visit and enjoy their woodland heritage.

The half-day's journey which separated the ambitious city from "the forest walks and beechen woods" beloved of the poet Clare, is now reduced to one of little more than half an hour. From the high ground amid the woods, the eye instinctively turns to where

"The city lies beneath its drift of smoke,"

or sees at night

"In heaven the light of London flaring like a dreary dawn,"

as Tennyson wrote, when living in the forest at High Beach.

BIRCH AND BRACKEN-FERN.

The growth of the suburbs, and the consequent increase of smoke, render the panorama yearly less distinct, though as an element in the scene, the wreaths of smoke above the countless chimneys produce an effect sometimes weird, often pleasing, never wholly unpicturesque. The hills of Kent show blue beyond the Thames, while the boom of

artillery from Woolwich, the hooting of the steamers on the river, and the shrill scream of locomotives reach the ear with their message of unceasing activity—an activity so strangely alien to the pulsing life of the woods that the listener, who but an hour previous had perhaps revolted against the sordid struggle in office, shop, or factory, hears as in a dream, and with brief forgetfulness of the cares of business enters without a jarring thought into the rest and quietude that here awaits him.

In the forest to-day King Demos reigns supreme, and the former tyrannical restrictions by the kings of England are forgotten by those who enter it at will and wander where once to tread would have been a trespass. Attracted to-day, as the city's population justly may be to what is their own, the forest, so near to London, has always had an interest for her citizens, especially her civic officers.

Two at least of the forest villages were, in the Middle Ages, the birthplace of city magnates: Hugh of Waltham became Common Clerk of the City of London in 1312; Hamo de Chigwell filled several times the office of Lord Mayor. Many of London's mayors and rich city merchants have had their homes within the forest bounds. Some have been connected with the government of the forest. Sir Thomas Cooke, the mayor in 1462, who lived at Gidea Hall, near Romford, was appointed custodian of the forest round Havering. He was knighted at

the coronation of Edward the Fourth's queen, and permitted to enclose a piece of forest for a park. Suspected of adherence to the House of Lancaster, Cooke was charged with treason, and imprisoned, being released only on payment of £8000 to the king and £800 to the queen. Sir Crispe Gascoyne, an ancestor of the late Earl of Salisbury, the mayor in 1761, who lies buried at Barking, was elected a verderer, and was energetic in dealing with unauthorised enclosures in Hainault Forest, and Sir Thomas White, on retiring from the mayoralty, was appointed verderer by the commission in 1877. He was buried in the cemetery acquired by the corporation at Aldersbrook.

Beside the foregoing, many mayors and aldermen and others retired to end their days in Essex, and lie buried within the forest churches. Walthamstow claimed Sir George Monnox, the lord mayor in 1543, and Sir Gerard Conyers, the mayor in 1737. The former was heavily fined for refusing to accept the mayoralty a second time. He founded the Monnox Grammar Schools and the almshouses which stand beside the church. West Ham Church received the bodies of Sir Thomas Foote, the mayor in 1650, who died in 1688 at the great age of ninety-six, and Sir James Smyth, the mayor in 1684. At Barking were buried Sir Robert Beachcroft in 1721, Sir Richard Hopkins in 1735, and Sir Crispe Gascoyne, mentioned above.

Whittington, the mayor of famed romance, figures, according to the following account, in the dramatic incident of the arrest of the Duke of Gloucester at Pleshy. Richard the king, so runs the story, commanded Richard the mayor on that occasion to prepare horse, and accompany him into his forest of Essex, presumably, to give colour to the visit there, as a simple inspection of his deer, but in reality to take the duke unawares, who, when welcoming the cavalcade to his castle, was arrested in the presence of Whittington. A full account of Gloucester's arrest is given in the following chapter.

The mayor and aldermen of the City of London were in the past great sportsmen. From very early times until the beginning of the nineteenth century, the city maintained its own huntsmen and hounds. The Master of Hounds was a civic officer known as the "Common Hunt"—an abridged form possibly of Commonalty's Huntsman. He was a gentleman who—to quote from Riley's *Memorials of London*—received "yearly from the commonalty his vesture fees and rewards, together with all and singular the appurtenances and advantages in any way pertaining to the office aforesaid" as fully as previous holders, who in the reign of Richard the Second "had the fees of the stations at the crosses in Cheape."

Mr. Common Hunt had assistant huntsmen,

both horse and foot, the latter being sometimes described as the mayor's "young men," and his office obliged him to provide the best possible sport for the mayor and commonalty of the city. So important a feature of ancient civic life were the huntsmen, that many mayors made reference to them in their pageants, and it is recorded by Stowe that when the Lord Mayor in 1432 rode out of London to welcome King Henry the Sixth home from France, his three huntsmen accompanied him "on great coursers," and were gorgeously attired "in entire suits of red all bespangled with silver."

It is interesting at the present day to imagine a meet of the city hounds in the Lincoln's Inn Fields, or at May Fair, and to picture them in their kennels in the fields of Finsbury. Houndsditch, the old dyke on the outside of the city wall that ran from the Bishop's Gate to the eastern Old Gate (Aldgate) is believed to derive its name from the presence there of hounds.

That the citizens had enjoyed in early Norman, and possibly in Saxon, times the privilege of hunting in the country round London is evidenced from the wording of the charter of Henry the First. By granting the London citizens the right "to have their huntings and to hunt as best and most fully as their ancestors," Henry recognised and sanctioned an existing custom. The hunting-ground

mentioned in the charter is Middlesex, Surrey, and the Chiltern country; FitzStephen adds, "and in Kent as far as the river Cray." The charters of succeeding kings are modelled on the lines of Henry's charter, and in none of them is the forest of Essex included.

And yet throughout the centuries there are notices of civic hunts in Essex, and the corporation of London claimed before the Royal Commissioners in 1863, to possess certain ancient rights of hunting in the forest of Essex. The commissioners in their final report stated that the entries in the corporation's Records, of "hunting at Havering and other places in the forest of Waltham would seem to be exceptional, and may well have been on invitation of the crown to hunt there," and since, for want of further evidence, the corporation did not press their claim, the right of the citizens to hunt in the forest of Essex has never been satisfactorily determined.

The Easter Chase, known a century ago as the "Epping Hunt," which was the delight of the Londoners for generations, is treated fully in another part of this work. It took place within the bounds of the forest, only after the kings of England had ceased to jealously guard the most esteemed of all their hunting-grounds—the forest of Waltham.

The tyrannical jealousy of the Plantagenet monarchs in matters forestal sufficiently explains

the absence of any charter to the citizens of London to hunt in the royal forest of Essex, and serves to emphasise the favour bestowed upon them when, through gratitude or otherwise, the king expressly commanded the mayor and civic officers to join him in hunting in his forest. The following is a case in point.

When Edward the Fourth wished to recover the town of Berwick, he appealed to the citizens of London for five thousand marks to support his campaign against the Scots. They loyally responded, and Edward showed his appreciation by a royal invitation to the lord mayor, aldermen, and certain commoners, to attend him in his forest of Waltham.

A pleasant hunting match was arranged, and many red and fallow deer were killed for their disport, while a sumptuous repast was made ready within a pleasant arbour, built of green boughs. Here the king graciously waived the ceremony of commencing the feast, commanding instead that his guests be served first. The king's officers served the company with many "deintie dysshes and of dyverse wynes good plentye," while during the meal the Lord Chamberlain and others repeatedly cheered the assembled Londoners, who finally departed with every mark of royal favour, carrying away a goodly quantity of venison.

In the following month, the August of 1481, the

king's bounty extended to the ladies of London. "The mayoresse and her systers, aldermennes wyfes," were presented with two harts and six bucks, and a tun of wine to drink with the venison. Whereupon they named a day, and made a feast in the old Draper's Hall, to which a great company of citizens were invited.

Twenty years previous, however, to this pleasing state of unanimity, the mayor and the legal officials of London visited Essex in company with their huntsman for the express purpose of maintaining their right to hunt there. The story as recorded among the archives of the city runs thus:—

In the April of the year 1460, the mayor, the recorder, one of the sheriffs, the common pleader, and seven other citizens "assigned together with a convenient band of men, and the Common Hunt of the city, to hunt and chase according to the custom and liberties of the city hitherto approved and used within the lands of the abbot and convent of Stratford, near the abbey there, and in all other places of the neighbourhood, etc., in preservation of the liberties aforesaid, etc., inasmuch as, according to recent information given to the mayor and aldermen, the aforesaid abbot had by divers threats forbidden the Common Hunt of the city under peril to presume to hunt in any of his lands there in any way, etc., contrary to the force, form, and effect of the liberties, etc."

Following this decision is the sequel. The record is somewhat mutilated, but sufficient of it remains to form a readable conclusion. From it can be inferred that a visit to Stratford was made, and that "a certain John Danyell of West Ham," a tenant of the abbot, determined to prevent the hunt, and assaulted the city's huntsman. An explanation of Danyell's conduct was evidently demanded from the abbot, for "he appeared in person before the mayor and aldermen," and recognising that the action of Danyell was "contrary to the liberties and franchises" of the city, stated that his tenant had acted "against his will, knowledge, and authority," which left Danyell no other alternative but to confess "that he was a delinquent therein" and to submit himself.

Now, though in those far-off days the citizens of London evidently proved their right to hunt in Essex, round Stratford, they did not thereby establish a right to hunt in the royal forest. The Abbey of Stratford and the little village of West Ham lay to the right of the king's highway, going from Bow Bridge towards Romford, and the highway had been declared the boundary of the king's forest by the perambulation of 1301. The "lands of the abbot and convent of Stratford near the abbey" and "the other places of the neighbourhood," claimed as a hunting-ground by the mayor and his supporters at the time of the above occur-

rence, had been disafforested, therefore, for upwards of a century and a half.

How, when, and through whom, the city obtained the right "to hunt and chase according to the custom and liberties of the city" in the neighbourhood of Stratford, it is impossible to say at present, and it is instructive to note that a presentment was made in 1495 at one of the forest courts, to the effect that the "Comyn Hunt" of the city, with his son-in-law and another man, had hunted in the purlieus of the forest and slain two harts; an offence against the forest laws because they were not "purlieu men," that is, owners of lands on the outskirts of the forest.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, no change in the city's relations with the forest can be discovered. The mayor, aldermen, and officers of the City of London who hunted at Havering in the reign of Queen Elizabeth did so, without doubt, by the gracious invitation of the sovereign, since Havering was the site of the royal palace, and the forest for miles around was crown demesne. In the reign of Queen Anne, however, the seizure of the city's foot huntsman while hunting in the forest furnishes an incident of interest.

In the records of the corporation, under date February 12, 1705, the Lord Mayor announced at his court that "his foot huntsman is committed to the custody of a constable in Essex by John

Wroth, Esq., of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the same county, for hunting the city's hounds in the fforest there." The mayor stated that he had requested the man's discharge, but had been informed that his huntsman would be detained until it was decided " whether he be liable to serve the queen according to the present Act for Recruiting Her Majesty's Land Forces;" in which dilemma it was decided that Mr. Common Hunt should visit Mr. Wroth and endeavour to bail out his subordinate, a commission he successfully executed.

A week later, the court debated the question of " several persons that were lately committed or bound over " by the above Justice to appear at the next Quarter Sessions " for hunting with the city's hounds in Waltham forest," and full information of the circumstances was requested that the court might know what steps to take in the matter. Therefore, the following week, three persons were called in, and testified " that one John Balme, pretending himself, as they thought, to be a constable, because he produced no warrant or staff, seized the Common Hunt's foot huntsman in the field, and carried him before the said Mr. Justice Wroth," who disbelieved their word that the prisoner was one of the city's huntsmen, declaring that the man " was a seaman by his face," and informed them that he intended " to try the

city's right of hunting, and that he would bind them over to answer as aforesaid, for unlawfully hunting in the said fforest."

The court decided, on the evidence, to bring an action against the Essex constable for assault, and directed their witnesses to appear at the sessions, and placed the prosecution of the constable in the hands of the city's solicitor.

It is very greatly to be regretted that the result of this action is quite unknown. The Records of the Corporation contain no further reference to it, and the Session Books and Process Books of Indictments of that period are known to have been burnt or otherwise destroyed. It would be interesting to determine whether the corporation successfully met the charge of unlawful hunting. If John Wroth, the justice of the peace, who questioned their right in the forest was identical—as seems likely—with John Wroth the ranger at that time, it is curious that he should not have recognised their claim, if such existed, and so far, the claim of the city to hunt in the forest has not been discovered on any of the forest rolls which record such claims.

The licences which were granted to individual citizens in the eighteenth century were similar to the following: "Ing. Roudeau of Spital Fields, merchant, to hunt, hawk, course, sett, shoot, and fish within the forest at all seasonable times from

and after the first day of September to the twenty-fifth of March following yearly, and at no other time. With one or two persons in his company and no more, and to kill and carry away in and from the forest and the limits thereof, all manner of beast or fowl of forest (red and fallow deer only excepted), he always acquainting the keeper of the walk when he intends so to hunt, etc., provided always that he do use the liberty so given him with the moderation that is fitting."

Though of a non-sporting character, the gathering known as the Fairlop Fair connected the forest of Essex with the workers of London for the greater part of the last two centuries.

Early in the eighteenth century there frequently reposed under the shade of a venerable oak in Hainault Forest a certain pump maker of the parish of St. John's, Wapping. Daniel Day—Good Day as he was called—like many another London merchant, had acquired land on the confines of the ancient forest for a country residence. On the first Friday in July of each year he regaled his employees, beneath the spreading branches of his favourite tree, with a feast of beans and bacon.

Day's beanfeast became so popular among the block and pump makers of Wapping that not only did others join in the festivity, but the meeting attracted to the spot vendors of various wares, who erected booths about the tree, and established an

annual fair which flourished long after its originator was dead. The giant oak sheltered Day in death as in life, for, faithful to his wishes, his friends buried him in a coffin made from the wood of a fallen limb. One account states that the limb was specially lopped for the purpose, and that the loppers were prosecuted for their trespass, but managed to clear themselves under the plea that they had made a "fair lop" which had not injured the forest monarch. From that circumstance popular belief ascribes the origin of the name Fairlop. Another attempt to explain the name is found in an old song which runs:—

> To Hainault Forest Queen Anne she did ride
> And beheld the beautiful oak by her side.
> And after viewing it from the bottom to top
> She said to her court, "It is a fair lop."

The Fairlop Oak was a giant of thirty-six feet in girth, with massive limbs, originally seventeen in number, but in the days of the famous fair but eleven, which cast a shade over an acre of ground. In the year 1805, through the carelessness of some picnickers, the tree caught fire, and the flames ate into the trunk and caused much damage. The injuries were dressed with a special preparation, and the following notice appealed to the chivalry of true forest lovers:—

"All good foresters are requested not to hurt this old tree, a plaster having been applied to its wounds."

The fierce gales of February 1820 rendered abortive all efforts to preserve the aged invalid. It stood—a wreck of its former great self, with its memories of Saxon and Norman times, and the centuries when London's lord mayor and civic officers had swept past it in the chase on Fairlop Plain—until the fiat went forth in 1851 from the Office of Woods and Forests, that the trees of Hainault were to be stubbed up. The old tree, with all its younger brethren, was therefore ruthlessly dragged from the soil. From its wood was made the pulpit and reading desk of St. Pancras Church, London, and also, it is believed, the pulpit in Wanstead Old Church.

With the destruction of Hainault Forest the Fairlop Fair came to an end. The spectacle of a long boat, mounted on coach wheels and gaily masted, with a crew of pseudo-sailors, which for years was driven annually through the forest, appeared to the uninitiated to have no connection with the one-time beanfeast. It was, however, a generous attempt on the part of a few to keep the name of Daniel Day still green in the memory of the dwellers of Wapping.

When Day died in 1767, his body was conveyed down the Thames from Wapping to Barking—where he lies buried—and was attended by six journeymen pump and block makers, who received each a white leather apron and a guinea for his

service. The arrangement was by request, and grew out of the circumstance that Day in his

WANSTEAD OLD CHURCH.

journeys between Wapping and Fairlop had experienced mishaps from his horse, his mule,

and finally from a chaise, and mistrusted land conveyances.

The Wappingites who left the East End of London on fair day and travelled by the Woodford Road to Loughton, thence to Fairlop and home by Ilford, were the survivors of a once interesting gathering of jovial Londoners in the Essex forest.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGS OF ENGLAND IN THEIR FAVOURITE HUNTING-GROUND

Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp?
Are not these woods more free from peril
Than the envious Court?

From earliest recorded history, hunting as a recreation from the cares of state has been the chief amusement of the kings of England.

Those very early British monarchs, the Coels, first, second, and third, are too remote for their prowess in the chase to attract attention. Coel, in the memory of most folk, is connected with the "merry old soul" of nursery fable, who called for his pipe, bowl, and fiddlers three; and who, no doubt, had the rhyme been but longer, would have

called for his bow, his hounds, and his huntsmen three; for Coel—the real Coel—was an Essex worthy, who had his oppidum at Colchester, where Coel's kitchen can be seen to-day.

With the Roman invasion, Julius Cæsar and Casivellaunus are notable figures in the forest, for when Cæsar crossed the Lea at Old Ford, and the Roding at Ilford, his movements were watched by Casivellaunus from the British entrenchments—that at Amesbury Banks, Epping, being considered by some to have an earlier historical connection than its reputed one with Queen Boadicea. When Cæsar advanced upon Casivellaunus at South Weald, he burnt down the forest round Brentwood, and thus gave the place the name of Brent or Burnt wood.

A century later, King Cunobelin—Shakespeare's "Cymbeline"—who ruled at Colchester, is prominent, with the Emperor Claudius Cæsar. Claudius was present at the taking of the royal town of Colchester — Camulodunum as it was called, meaning the town of the Gallic deity, Camulos —then fortified by a stockade of trees, which the Britons had felled from the forest around. Colchester became the "Colonia" of Claudius, the first Roman town in this country, but was soon after reduced to ashes by Queen Boadicea, and when rebuilt by the governor, Suetonius, was protected by a grand circuit of wall, the remains of which are unique throughout the land.

With the advent of the Saxons, and the consequent formation of the kingdom of the East Sex, from which name the word Essex is derived, the history of the chase becomes more defined. The Saxons brought with them a greater love of hunting from motives of pure sport, and to them it is believed that England owes her fallow deer. Near Ilford is a district which has now completely lost its forestal nature, known as Seven Kings. A local tradition strives to reconcile the modern name with a supposed visit to this spot of the Saxon monarchs of the heptarchy. According to the story, duly handed down and firmly believed in, the seven monarchs, after hunting in the neighbouring forest, halted their steeds for purposes of refreshment at a stream which has always been known as Seven Kings Water. That seven petty kings once met here under such conditions is not without strong possibility. Near the spot stood the famous Abbey of Barking, the home of royal ladies. Erkenwald, its founder, was the son of Abbas, King of East Anglia. His friends were the King of Northumbria, Ethelbert the King of Kent, and Sebbi and Sighere the Kings of Essex, whose kingdom included London and the district afterwards named Middlesex, and the King of Wessex, who had an interest in the famous nunnery. One other sovereign would complete the list of princes thus drawn together by Erkenwald, who in his spiritual

office as Bishop of St. Paul's, London, may have striven to cement the friendship of the various small kingdoms, and banish political differences in the pleasures of a common hunt.

But to come to matters historical, and the days of King Alfred. Though the great Saxon monarch was a most expert and active hunter, it is not for his proficiency in the chase that his memory is linked with the forest of Essex, but rather for the tenacity with which he held to the seemingly hopeless task of ridding the country of the Danes. Essex retains a memorial to his efforts in this direction in the divided stream of the river Lea.

> "The prince in many a fight their forces still defyd,
> The goodly river Lea he likewise did divide,"

sings Drayton. It appears that the Danes had sailed out of the Thames, up its tributary the Lea, and had reached inland, the town of Hertford. Their presence so near the City of London was a source of much anxiety to the worthy citizens, so when the trusted monarch appeared in the neighbourhood, they came out gladly to his aid.

Then Alfred, following in the wake of the marauders, came to Waltham and Cheshunt, when, according to the account given by Lambarde, "by fortune Kinge Alfred passinge by espied that the channel of the river might be in such sorte weakened, that they should want water to return with their shippes; he caused therefore the water to be

abated by two great trenches and settinge the Londoners upon them, he made them batteil." The result was so successful that the Danes "forsoke all, and left their shippes as a prey to the Londoners, who breakinge some, and burninge others, conveyed the rest to London."

But the forestal county was destined to be the theatre for yet greater conflicts between the Saxon and the Dane. The eldest son of Alfred, King Edward, found it necessary to bring his army into Essex, and oppose the Danes hired by his cousin to contest the crown, which culminated in the fearful disaster of Assandune, now Ashingdon, some thirty miles from London and five from Southend.

"King Edward," says the Saxon chronicler, "came to Maeldune (Maldon) and abode there while men worked and built a town at Witham." Witham, which means the lonely place, which the son of Alfred built in the early part of the tenth century, was not on the spot of the Witham of to-day on the main London to Colchester road, but that of Chipping Hill, a half mile or more away, where a circular camp with a double vallum can still be distinctly traced. The name Chipping recalls memories of Saxon markets. The word Chipping, from the Saxon Ceping or Chepe, denoted merchandise, and was applied to those places where merchants sold their wares, usually on Sundays. The London Cheapside and Eastcheap are so called.

Chipping Ongar, a few miles from the edge of the existing forest beyond Epping, is another Essex town which retains its ancient market name. The district is famous for the quaint and unique little

St. Edmund's Church, Greenstead.

wooden church of St. Edmunds at Greenstead, in which the body of the murdered King Edmund of East Anglia rested in its transit from London to Suffolk. The body had been taken to, and kept for safety in, the Church of St. Gregory by St. Paul's in London, but after the country had settled down, a party of monks carried the remains from the metro-

polis, and by way of the Roman road—the "Old Suffolk Way"—to Bury St. Edmunds. The route after crossing the Lea at Old Ford lay past Wanstead and through that part of the forest afterwards known as Hainault, which stretched away to the east of the river Roding. Of the various stages of the journey two are prominently marked. They are Stapleford Abbots, a boundary in later days of the curtailed forest area, about fifteen miles from London, and Ongar already mentioned. At Stapleford the body was received into the house of the lord of the manor who lay ill. The presence of the saintly remains of the pious king, however, effected a complete cure. The recovered lord, out of his gratitude, devoted the revenues of his manor to the use of the Abbot of St. Edmund's Abbey, from which act the place received the additional name of Abbots, to distinguish it from Stapleford Tawney near by.

Arrived at Ongar from Stapleford, the body rested at a spot afterwards called Greenstead, which, as the name implies, was nothing but a grassy glade in the forest, and where to-day are only a few houses beside the church. There, in the secluded and peaceful woodland, was erected the self-same little edifice that stands to-day—the sole survivor of the ancient Saxon wooden churches, which escaped the fury of the Danes. The historic interest of the building is great, but its structural

peculiarity is even greater. Trunks of oak, or as some think, sweet chestnut trees, are placed in row to form an oblong building—the nave of the present church. These tree trunks are ingeniously tongued together, and held in position by a solid beam running their entire length. In the interior the rounded stems have been brought by the Saxon workmen to an even wall, by means of the adze, the marks of which are distinctly shown. Outwardly the trees are untouched, and their rounded boles, deeply scored by the weather of the centuries, give a pillar-like effect to the sides. A wooden steeple at one end, and a brick chancel at the other are additions, and the roof is new, otherwise the wall of tree trunks remains intact, with the exception of a brick sill, which replaced the decaying base in the year 1848.

In spite of his mistrust of most amusements, the saintly Edward the Confessor was a keen sportsman. "He loved to follow a pack of swift hounds in pursuit of game, and to cheer them with his voice," writes his chronicler. Often must his cheer have mingled with the cry of the hounds in the Essex woods, for they were his favourite hunting-ground, and in their midst he built his Bower. The spot chosen was exactly suited to his peace-loving, devotional nature. It lay less than twenty miles from his palace at Westminster, and commanded a superb view over dense forest. The building

which the Confessor raised on this elevated site, afterwards known as Havering-atte-Bower, partook of the nature of a palace, a hunting lodge, a retreat from the cares of office, and a place for peaceful devotion. At first the Confessor's nightly vigils

The Log Nave, St. Edmund's, Greenstead.

were disturbed by the songs of the nightingales, and he prayed that their warbling might be stopped. His request was granted, and, as a consequence, says the old tradition, the nightingales were ever after silent in the woods of Havering, though they continued to pour forth their songs in the forest around.

The Confessor's brother-in-law and successor, Harold, was also a noted huntsman, and seldom travelled without hound and hawk. When Matilda and her Norman ladies wove the Bayeux tapestry, they represented Harold, thus fully equipped for the chase, on the occasion of his visit to Duke William in Normandy. Much of the soil in and around the present forest area was Harold's, and when at Waltham, on the site formerly occupied by the hunting lodge of Tovi the Dane (standard-bearer to Canute), he built his noble minster, he endowed it with many lordships in the surrounding forest.

The name of the Saxon Harold is retained in the names Harold's Park, the earliest enclosed park known as such, near Nazeing, and Harold's Wood, a hamlet near Romford. In his park was a dwelling, where Harold's Park Farm is now, where it is believed the king slept on the night preceding his departure for Sussex to confront Duke William. According to the beautifully pathetic legend, the king knelt for the last time before the altar in his minster, and prostrate before the miracle-working cross, for which Waltham was renowned, besought victory over his foe. Then the sacristan at the altar, gazing at the figure of the Saviour on the cross, saw the Head which always looked heaven-ward, bend in sorrowing pity towards the royal suppliant—a sign of the impending disaster on the fatal field of Senlac.

That the dead body of Harold was brought back from Hastings by his sorrowing wife, Editha, and

FROM HAROLD'S PARK FARM, NEAR NAZEING.

the faithful monks of Waltham Abbey, and interred with his brothers in the famous Abbey Church, is

not only a traditional belief, but a firm conviction, based on much documentary evidence, by historians who have lived on the spot. The place of sepulture was before the high altar, in that part of the minster which afterwards fell away, and lay in ruinous heaps in the churchyard. The tomb therefore became exposed to the weather. On two separate occasions a tomb and coffin of Purbeck marble was unearthed, and acclaimed as the tomb of the Saxon King. The first discovery was made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, by a gardener, who was clearing the ground. The coffin had evidently been interred with great care, and the skeleton was perfect. The remains were not, however, reinterred as befitted a king, though for nearly two centuries afterwards the spot was pointed out as the burial-place of King Harold. Over it was erected a garden fountain, and both Dr. Fuller in 1655 and Mr. Farmer in 1735 allude to the place of interment as being under the fountain, "where now," says the latter, "there is a bowling-green." The spot is now unmarked, for the tomb of the last of the Saxon Kings was either entirely lost sight of or destroyed. An undoubted Saxon battle-axe, purported to be Harold's, is to be seen in the vestry of the present church.

The Conqueror is believed to have followed into Essex, and while the Tower of London was building, frequently resided at Barking Abbey, from which

it is said he commenced his progress through the country. The lands round Waltham belonging to the monastery William appropriated to himself. This unusual severity towards a religious establishment was not part of William's general policy, and can be explained only by the grudge he entertained against his late foe. His love of the tall deer, no doubt, sent him frequently through the forest around Barking, which contained for him perhaps memories of hunts with Edward the Confessor at the time that William extracted from the former some sort of promise to make him his successor.

To what extent the Conqueror used Essex as a hunting-ground is uncertain, but with the Norman rule the whole county soon became subjected to severe forest laws, which William Rufus found means to increase. Whether Sir Walter Tyrrel, who shot Rufus in the New Forest, belonged to Essex or no, it is certain that the Tyrrels of Essex are of a very ancient family, who were sheriffs of Essex in the Middle Ages, and considered to be Tyrrel's descendants.

The troubled condition of the country in Stephen's day converted the forest into hiding-places for robbers – Geoffrey de Mandeville, the famous first Earl of Essex, was both outlawed and excommunicated for his deeds of violence, and gathered round him a gang of ruffians — Flemish mercenaries chiefly — and became a villainous prototype of

Robin Hood. The great enemy of Mandeville was the Earl of Arundel, who at the time was possessed of Waltham by right of his wife Adelicia, the widow of the late Henry the Second. Waltham was therefore attacked and fired. The townsfolk in alarm placed their valuables for safety in the minster, but the robbers effected an entrance, and commenced to plunder. The age of miracles, however, was not past. The canons besought the aid of the wondrous cross before the altar, but in such a rough manner as to pull it from its place to the floor. Instantly its latent power worked. The robbers were rendered incapable of resistance, and were easily taken and flogged by the monks, while Mandeville, besieging the Castle of Burwell in Cambridgeshire, at the same instant received his death wound.

The visits of Henry the Second to Waltham and its forest were many. At Ongar, eleven miles—as the crow flies—from Waltham, lived his justiciar, Richard de Lucy, who acted as viceroy during Henry's absence on the continent. When Henry wished to appoint Becket to the see of Canterbury, he sought the aid of Lucy the Loyal to place the chancellor on the chair of Canterbury. This Lucy duly accomplished. After Becket's death, Waltham was raised in the monastic scale to an abbey. The secular canons were turned adrift, a larger number of canons of the Augustine order were appointed,

some structural alterations were made, and the abbey further endowed and named after St. Lawrence. "It was fit that Christ's spouse should have a new dowry," said the king, for he had vowed to expiate for the death of Becket.

Thereafter, Waltham Abbey became a favourite resort of the kings of England until the days of Henry the Eighth. It was situated within easy reach of the court, was surrounded by a vast forest, affording every kind of sport, and was capable of entertaining with right royal magnificence. In fact, so well did it suit the Plantagenet kings, that many of them saved the expenses of a court by going into residence there, to the neglect of the royal palace of Havering-atte-Bower, which stood but ten miles to the east.

King John, with his "sour and angry countenance," was a constant visitor to the royal forest of Waltham. Often did he ride out of the abbey to hunt in the woods around; often were the trophies of the chase carried through the abbey gate. But not alone for his prowess in the chase is John's memory linked with the history of the county. In Essex lived his great foe, the Lord Fitzwalter, Baron of Dunmow, castellan and banner-bearer to the City of London. A picture in the Guildhall represents Fitzwalter receiving from the hands of the mayor of London the city's banner. He it was who, after much provocation, placed himself at the

head of the baron's army with the title of "Marshall of God and of Holy Church," and forced John to sign the *Magna Carta*. Several clauses of the Great Charter have reference to grievances arising from the royal forests, for John's revengeful character had caused him to order the removal of all fences bordering the royal forests of Waltham, which left the cultivated fields of his subjects a prey to the deer.

Edward the First—he of the long shanks—was often with his hounds and falcons in the Essex woods, particularly at Waltham. One Easter time the king, with Queen Eleanor and the ladies and gentlemen of the court, stayed at Waltham for several days. Edward had returned one day fatigued from the chase, and retired to his room for rest, when the queen's maids, being in a sportive humour, burst in upon their royal master, and unceremoniously treated him to the old Easter custom of "heaving." His long length they raised aloft till he cried mercy, and paid them two pounds a head—there were seven of them—to set him at liberty.

Another story of Edward at Waltham is told by a local historian, the late W. Winters, who relates how "the king spied the queen's laundress, named Matilda of Waltham, among the lookers-on in the courtyard while the hounds were being coupled, and the gallant hunters mounted for Easter Hunt.

The king, being in a merry mood, wagered that Matilda could not ride with them on a fleet hunter. She accepted the challenge, mounted the fast steed, and rode with such success that the king was fain to redeem his good horse for forty shillings."

When Queen Eleanor died and her body was brought from Grantham to London, the last resting-place before reaching the capital was in the Abbey Church at Waltham, where the body rested one night before the altar. One of those exquisite stone crosses, which Edward raised to the memory of his dead queen, was erected a mile west of the abbey at the spot where travellers and pilgrims left the king's highway to cross the river Lea for Waltham Abbey. It was therefore placed beyond the forest boundary, and graces the county of Hertford at Waltham Cross, named after it.

Seventeen years after the funeral of Queen Eleanor, the dead body of Edward was brought to Waltham, and instead of being carried before the army into Scotland according to the king's instructions, was permitted to remain under the care of the monks in their beautiful Norman church for the space of fifteen weeks.

"For a while," writes Professor Freeman, "two heroes lay side by side—the last and first of the English kings. . . . The king with whom England fell might greet his first true successor in the king

with whom she rose again. . . . In the whole course of English history we hardly come across a scene which speaks more deeply to the heart than when the first founder of our later greatness was laid by the side of the last kingly champion of our earliest freedom—when the body of the great Edward was laid, if only for a short time, by the side of Harold, the son of Godwin."

The boy King Richard the Second frequently came into his forest of Essex. His connection, however, with those stirring events—the peasants' rising under Wat the Tyler, and the arrest of his uncle, the Duke of Gloucester—have in Essex completely overshadowed his prowess in the chase. During the rioting of the peasants Waltham Abbey was chosen as a safe retreat for the young king. After the death of Tyler, and during the pursuit and defeat of the Essex peasantry in the woods of Billericay—twenty odd miles from London—Richard made his headquarters at the old hunting palace in the royal chase of Writtle near Chelmsford, and was present to witness the hanging of the captured leaders.

Three miles from the site of the palace at Haver-ing-atte-Bower is Lambourne Church, which in Richard's reign was a little Norman building, hidden away in the recesses of the forest, and is even at the present day in a particularly secluded and peaceful spot, one mile from the remnant of Hain-

ault Forest. Restoration and alteration have robbed the church of almost all its Norman features, but it is of interest from the fact that at the time of Tyler's rebellion the Lambourne was held by the

The Church, Lambourne.

Bishop of Norwich, a cleric of a bellicose disposition, who boldly placed himself at the head of the neighbouring gentry and their retainers for the protection of the king's and their own property.

The second incident which links the memory of Richard with the forest is the disgraceful Gloucester murder. Under pretence of visiting the forest to

inspect his deer, Richard rode from Havering-atte-Bower, and came to Pleshy Castle, the hereditary seat of the Lord High Constable of England. "On a day, the Kynge in maner as goyng a huntyng, rode from Haverying of Bour, a xx myle from London in Essexe and within xx myle of Plasshey, where the Duke of Gloucester helde his house," is the account in the quaint old English of Bourchier's *Froissart*. The party arrived about five o'clock, and when the king had supped, he made the following request: "Faire uncle, cause fyve or sixe horses of yours to be sadylled, for I wyll praye you to ryde with me to London," in order, he said, to discuss in council the many points of dissatisfaction, upon which he wanted his uncle's advice. The unsuspecting duke set out with his royal nephew, who rode by his side conversing pleasantly. Before leaving the shelter of the forest, however, the king on nearing Stratford and the high road—which up till now had been studiously avoided—rode forward, leaving the duke alone. Instantly the Earl Marshal arrested him. The duke, recognising the trap into which he had fallen, called out loudly to his deceitful nephew. "I can nat tell," continues the chronicler, "weder the Kyng herde hym or nat, but he turned nat, but rode forthe faster than he dyde before," and was soon in London. The duke was hastened on board a ship, waiting in the river, and conveyed to Calais, where, according to the

account given by one of his murderers, he was smothered with pillows.

But the story has its sequel. Some time afterwards the Duke of Exeter, the king's brother, sought to escape out of the country by way of Essex. But Fate and the tides were against him. He fell into the hands of those who cherished Gloucester's memory, and because of his share in the duke's death, he was handed over to the men of Pleshy, who executed him before the castle walls. Nothing remains of Pleshy Castle now, but remnants of wall and the brick arch spanning the moat.

In Shakespeare's *Richard the Second* the widowed duchess—who retired to the seclusion of the cloister in Barking Abbey—sought help but received but cold comfort from Gloucester's brother, the Duke of Lancaster, and by him sent a message to the other brother, the Duke of York.

> "Bid him. O what!
> With all good speed at Plashey visit me.
> Alack! and what shall good old York there see
> But empty lodgings and unfurnished walls,
> Unpeopled offices, untrodden stones;
> And what hear there for welcome, but my groans?"

The period occupied by the Wars of the Roses has little of special interest to offer, though many visits were paid to the Essex woods, and the royal palace of Havering-atte-Bower, and elsewhere. The Lancastrian and Yorkist sovereigns had fre-

quently to exchange the hunter for the warhorse, the bugle for the trumpet, while the falcon's glove was replaced by the gauntlet. But with the accession of the famous Henry the Eighth, the goddess of the chase again held sway. Bluff King Hal gave to sylvan sports new life and vigour. The royal forests of Essex resounded from end to end with the eager baying of the hound, and the clarion notes of the huntsman's horn, for Henry filled in person the honourable office of Steward or Lord Warden of the forest. The royal palaces were full of life and activity, and the nobles vied with each other in providing amusements for the pleasure-loving monarch, as, for example, the capture of some erring monks and nuns in a buck-stall by Sir Harry Colt; a story told in a subsequent chapter.

"Waltham bells told no tales when the king came there," observes Farmer, and go there he did frequently, for he had a house near the abbey for his own peace and privacy. But though well known to the lord abbot, Henry was able to pass incognito, when—as the story goes—the king one day appeared at the abbey dressed as a royal guard and looking a veritable beef-eater.

Under the pretence that he had lost the rest of the hunting party, he claimed their hospitality, and was invited to the abbot's table. Again and again he helped himself from a huge sirloin of beef set

before him, till the astonished abbot could no longer refrain from comment. "Well fare thy heart," he exclaimed, "and here in a cup of sack I drink to the health of thy royal master." So far, so good, but at this point the worthy abbot committed himself by a rash declaration. "I would give an hundred pounds," he boldly averred, "on condition that I could feed as lustily on beef as you do." The royal trencherman made a mental note of the conditions. "But alas!" continued the churchman, "my weak and queasie stomach will hardly digest the wing of a small chicken or rabbit." The erstwhile guard no doubt commiserated with him on such a lamentable state of indigestion, and pledging him in return, he departed.

It was some weeks after, when, to the dismay of the convent, the abbot was ordered to London, committed to the Tower, and fed on bread and water only for several days, which gradually, but surely, gave him a most alarming appetite. "Yet not so empty his body of food," says the old chronicler, Farmer, "as his mind was filled with fears creating many suspicions to himself, when and how he had incurred the king's displeasure." With a stomach all too empty, but a mind filled with vague uneasiness, the situation was becoming unendurable, when one day his gaolers set before him a sirloin of beef. The well-nigh famished abbot ate with such zest that he verified the proverb

that " two hungry meals make the third a glutton." In point of fact, in short—as Micawber would have said—he gorged.

Out of a lobby sprang the king, hitherto a silent and unobserved spectator of the proceeding, but now laughing heartily. " My Lord Abbot," quoth he, " deposit presently your hundred pounds of gold, or else no going hence all the days of your life. I have been your physician to cure you of your ' queasie stomach,' and here, as I deserve, I demand my fee for the same." The reply of the abbot is not on record; probably his astonishment and relief prevented one. In the expressive slang of the chronicler he " down with his dust," and departed lighter both in purse and heart than when he came.

A later visit of Henry to Waltham was destined to be a turning-point in English history. In company with the beautiful Anne Boleyn, secretly married to him, he had travelled the country. On his return towards London he stayed with her at Waltham and, quite by chance, was brought into touch with Cranmer. The future Archbishop of Canterbury had retired to Waltham to escape a pestilence at Cambridge, where he was Professor of Divinity, and at the house of two pupils of his he met with two court gentlemen, who reported to Henry, Cranmer's opinion to dispense with the papal sanction for the proposed divorce from the

queen and appeal to the universities. "The Cambridge fellow had the right sow by the ear," was Henry's comment the next morning, and Cranmer was sent for. The divorce of Queen Catharine, the crowning of Anne, the fall of Wolsey, the dissolution of the monasteries, and England's separation from the Church of Rome, followed as a consequence of that visit.

There is a tradition which states that on the memorable morning which left Henry wifeless—for a day only—that he visited the forest, where Anne and he had delighted to ride, and at High Beach, or Buckhurst Hill, or, as one account says, at East Ham, waited for the sound of the gun on Tower Hill to proclaim his freedom. It is further stated that when the roar of the cannon conveyed to him the news that the headsman's work was done—that Anne Boleyn was no more—he exclaimed, "The day's work is done, uncouple the dogs and let us follow the sport." This brutal remark has been excused on the plea that it was but a blind to hide from his attendants a war of conflicting emotions, and that he sought the activity of the chase to banish his troubled thoughts. Be this as it may, one thing is certain: wherever Henry was on that day, or whatever his state of mind, before the close of the day he had joined Jane Seymour, and was married to her privately the following morning.

Throughout the reign of Edward their son nothing of special interest presents itself, though the young king knew the forest well. There is a notice of Queen Mary's husband, Philip of Spain, hunting in the forest of Waltham and killing " a great stag with guns," the only incident of a sporting character that belongs to that sovereign.

When James the First ascended the throne he ordered an inquiry to be held into the state of Waltham Forest, " being a forest very near to our palace of Westminster and many other of our mansion houses, and situate and lying, as it were, under our eyes," with the result that the neglect of the three preceding reigns was made manifest. The full machinery of the forest laws was then put into action. There was a revival of severities, and a forest gaol was erected at Stratford to detain offenders. " I do boldly say," writes Osborn, " that one man in his (James') reign might with more safety have killed another, than a rascal deer." He speaks of the threats against any who helped an offender against the forest laws. " Thus satyrical, and if you please tragical, was this sylvan prince against deer killers and indulgent to men slayers."

James' love of hunting was carried to excess, and his courtiers must have tired of it. From the death of a deer to that of a hare, there was no cessation from activity whatever the weather, and

the quiet inhabitants of villages in or bordering the royal forests and chases were greatly incommoded. One day, the king's favourite hound, "Jewell," was missing, much to the royal anger; but next morning Jewell appeared with a letter tied to his collar. "Good Mr. Jewell," ran the epistle, "we pray you speak to the king (for he hears you every day, and so doth he not us), that it will please his Majesty to go back to London, or else the country will be undone. All our provision is spent, and we are not able to entertain him longer."

King Charles regarded the forest of Essex—as indeed all the royal forests—not only as a place for his amusement, but as a medium for imposing taxation. Never since the reign of John had Essex been so grievously burdened because of its forestal character. During the eleven years that Charles' rule was absolute he re-afforested whole "hundreds" in Essex which had been disforested for centuries in order to tax those who dwelt within the prescribed boundary. As a natural consequence, when the Civil War broke out, the sympathies of the people of Essex were almost entirely with the parliament. Among those who pleaded with the king, and begged him to retract even after the royal standard had been raised, was Richard Shute of Barking Hall. Shute had often played bowls with the king, and on one of these occasions obtained a great victory. He invited his royal

opponent to repair his loss by another game. Charles replied: "Thou hast won the day and much good may it do thee, but I must remember I have a wife and children."

The law of the forests in the sixteenth century allowed to the sovereign, in return for the labours incident to his kingly office, the prerogative to reserve the beasts of the chase to himself, and to make wherever he desired a forest for purposes of recreation. There was a cheerful acquiescence about this law which Charles completely spoiled. His people soon regarded the royal forests as standing monuments of regal oppression and injustice. During the days of the Commonwealth a scheme was drawn up for the disforesting of the whole, the sale of the land, and the felling of the trees. Before such could be executed, the restoration of royalty saved the forests from extinction.

The Epping Forest of to-day boasts of no "Royal Oak" beneath which visitors can stand and meditate on the strange adventures of Prince Charles. Though Essex afforded a splendid exit to the continent, no tradition breathes even a suspicion of the prince's powers of tree-climbing within its bounds, but when Charles became king, his actions more than atoned for this lack of interest. He combined the love of the chase, inherited from his grandfather James, with a love of fair ladies, similar to that of the much-married Henry the

Eighth, and Essex afforded facilities for either diversion. Addison wrote of Charles as

> Great Pan who wont to chase the Fair
> And loved the spreading oak.

Many were the gay doings witnessed in the mansion houses situated within or around the royal forest in the days of Charles the Second. That interesting ceremony known as the Knighting of the Loin of Beef belongs to the Essex Forest. According to an old rhyme—

> The Second Charles of England
> Rode forth one Christmastide
> To hunt a gallant stag of ten,
> Of Chingford woods the pride.

The hunt was cut short by a snowstorm which sent the party for shelter to Friday Hall, a mansion overlooking the Lea valley from Friday Hill, near Chingford Hatch, about nine miles from the city. Blazing logs and good cheer conducted on a scale of prodigal hospitality restored the good humour of the monarch. From a huge loin of beef he filled his plate—some say using his sword for a knife—

> Quoth Charles Odds fish! a noble dish,
> Aye, noble made by me,
> By kingly right I dub thee knight—
> Sir Loin—henceforward be.

Newport, in a district disafforested long before the days of Charles, but still thickly wooded and

stocked with deer in enclosed parks, boasts one of the reputed dwellings of Nell Gywnn. Woodford has also its Gywnne House, with which some strive to connect the famous Nell.

That King James the Second was a good follower of the buckhounds is evidenced by many stories. In the autobiography of Sir John Bramston the author relates how the king closely followed a stag which had been roused near Chelmsford and ran to Wanstead, where it doubled back and reached Brentwood, the king being in at the death. The next day another long run was made from the once royal house of New Hall across the Roothings to Hatfield Forest, thus proving the king a hard rider over rough country.

After the Revolution, the forest became chiefly noted for the gangs of desperadoes—discharged soldiers — who infested it. Notorious amongst these were the Waltham Blacks, so called from their habit of blackening their faces.

> Deep in the forest's dreary tracks
> There ranged at large fierce Waltham Blacks,

who killed the deer of the forest, and struck terror into the hearts of travellers.

A bold attempt to capture King William the Third shows the desperate character of these villains. The king was journeying past the forest on his way to Newmarket, when he was attacked,

and but for the prompt action of an officer, who came up in the nick of time, would have been taken—the "Blacks" intending no doubt to obtain a large ransom.

In the reign of George the First it was necessary to pass an Act for the suppression of these and similar ruffians. The "Black Act," however, failed to remove them. They bade defiance to the law, and impudently sent in a signed statement to that effect. A troop of horse dispersed them for a time, but they rallied, defiant as before, and therefore cavalry patrolled the highway between Waltham and Hackney every evening to safeguard travellers on the road.

A forest in close proximity to the capital abounding in secret lurking-places for robbers attracted the felons of all ages. The mercenaries of the outlawed De Mandeville, the first Earl of Essex, the ruffians of Wat Tyler and of Jack Cade, the notorious Waltham Blacks, and the band that served Dick Turpin, sheltered in the thickets of the forest, and levied their toll of life and treasure.

The forest officers were at all times fully alive to the public danger, and in the sixteenth century Sir Robert Wrothe of Loughton wrote to Mr.—afterwards Sir Michael—Hickes of Leyton, the lieutenant of the forest, that he had information of "sertaine lewde fellowes," both horsemen and footmen, who, disguised with beards, "doe fre-

quent and use aboute Layton Heath, and at or about Snaresbrook in your brother Colstones walke." He had " appoynted sum especiall spyall of them " in order that they might be " discifared," and he relied upon Hickes to order his " discreatest keepers " to keep a sharp look-out on dark nights between Temple Mills and Snaresbrook.

But the ancient road from London, across the marshes from Old Ford, which first resounded to the tramp of its Roman builders, continued to ring to the gallop of highwaymen's steeds, as the shelter of the dark forest was hastily sought by some knight of the road. The immortal Turpin, who learnt in the shambles of Whitechapel a fine disregard of life, became the king of highwaymen in London's forest.

It has been claimed for Turpin that he was a native of the forest. The name Turpin is seen on tombstones in Chigwell Churchyard, and visitors deduce from that fact that the highwayman was born there. In Wanstead Churchyard, also, lie Turpins of Whitechapel, and the credulous, knowing Dick to have been a Whitechapel butcher, give the reins to their imagination and picture Turpin at his supposed father's grave, while his famous mare Black Bess stands tethered to the sweeping branches of an ancient yew-tree which overshadows the Turpin resting-place. Dick, however, does not belong to the forest district, but to North Essex, near Thaxted.

When Turpin left Whitechapel, he joined a band of deer-stealers called the Gregory Gang, in the forest, and by his superior powers of devilry soon became their leader. The desperate character of Turpin is shown by a murderous attack upon an old lady, a resident of Loughton. Attracted by the report of hidden gold, he and his associates forced an entrance into the house, blindfolded the lady, and made a complete search, but without result. Maddened by failure, Turpin threatened to burn the woman, and not till he had actually thrust her upon the fire did she disclose the whereabouts of her treasure.

The forest keepers were powerless to deal with Turpin, and two, at least, met their death at his hands. One of them, resisting an attack upon his lodge, was beaten to death, and the murdering thieves decamped with one hundred and twenty guineas. Turpin then took to the road, and his deeds were recounted with covert admiration in all the inns of eastern London and the forest area. Associating himself with a highwayman named King, the two successfully hid themselves in a secluded hollow in the forest, which contained a cave large enough to stable their horses. With a price of £300 upon his head, Turpin was traced to the forest by two indefatigables, and one day suddenly confronted outside his hiding-place by a man with a gun and a peremptory order to sur-

render. Completely surprised and desirous of gaining time, Turpin pretended to comply with the man's request, and made some excuse to enter the cave. There, shielded by the darkness, he seized his pistols, and the next instant shot his would-be captor dead, whereupon the other man fled.

Forced to abandon his forest cave, Turpin narrowly escaped capture in London, and in the *mêlée* shot his friend Tom King by mistake. He retired to York—though his famous all-night ride thither on Black Bess is an invention of the novelist, Ainsworth—and, assuming the name of Palmer, was hung in 1739 for sheep-stealing.

Highway robbery in the forest was, however, by no means at an end. Fully fifty years after Turpin's death, it was no uncommon thing for the coaches from London to the eastern counties to be held up. A determined attack was once made upon the Norwich mail, and the guard's blunderbuss accounted for three highwaymen before he himself was shot. Less than a century ago, travellers entered the forest with some misgiving and the expectation of encountering a footpad, since, in 1813, Mr. Mellish, the Master of the Epping Forest Hounds, who was returning from a hunt with the king's hounds, was murdered and robbed.

It was largely due to the fact that the Essex forests and the neighbourhood of London was infested with highwaymen that the sovereigns of

the House of Hanover gradually ceased to use the royal forest of Waltham for hunting, and though in the reign of George the Second about a third of all the deer killed by the royal buckhounds were those of Epping Forest, yet royal visits to Essex became fewer as time went on, and finally ceased. The increase of arable land, and the introduction of the carted stag, led to much less wild deer-hunting in the days of George the Fourth. The fine herds of wild red deer in Essex were therefore no longer an attraction for the kings of England, though they afforded sport for the exiled royalties of France, Louis Joseph de Bourbon, Prince of Condé, and the Duc de Bourbon—in residence at the palatial Wanstead House—and were thereafter transported to Windsor Forest.

Thus ends the history of royal hunts in the forest of Essex, a forest praised in the Exchequer Bills of Charles I. as "alwaies and especiallie and above all theire other ffiorests prized and esteemed by the Kinges Majestie and his said noble progenitors the Kinges and Queenes of this Realme of England, as well for his and theire own pleasure, disport and recreation from those pressing cares for the publique weale and safetie which are inseparable incident to their Kinglie office, as for the entertaynment of foreyne Princes and Embassadors, thereby to show unto them the magnificence of the Kinges and Queenes of this Realme."

CHAPTER III

THE QUEENS OF ENGLAND IN THE FOREST—ROMANTIC ASSOCIATIONS

Swarm o'er the lawns, the forest walks surround,
Rouse the fleet hart, and cheer the opening hound.
. . . . . .
Let old Arcadia boast her ample plain,
Th' immortal huntress, and her virgin train.

THE precise period of English history in which the gentle sex first developed the desire to join the sports which long custom had confined to the male does not concern this work. A departure from the paths of weaving and tapestry as the recreations of femininity was of course pioneered by some royal Diana at some time.

It is certain that the Norman ladies were more addicted to hawking than were the men; which caused John of Salisbury to regard hawking as "a

trifling and frivolous amusement." It is also stated by historians that in the reign of Henry the Fifth, ladies having noticed the grace with which the stag carried its horns, their ambition to imitate him in their head-dresses was thereby aroused, and their coiffure was elaborated into partitions, which were carried above the head to a great height.

The part played by England's queens in the royal forests has not received much attention at the hands of historians. Queen Anne Boleyn and her daughter Queen Elizabeth are the only two whose names stand out prominently in the annals of sport. In Elizabeth the acme of feminine achievement was reached; yet even so, the neglect into which the forest of Essex had fallen since the days of Henry the Eighth was excused in the reign of James by the plea that the two queens regnant, Mary and Elizabeth, had, "by reason of their Sexe," failed to do justice to that "most royall and princelie pleasure" in which the kings had delighted.

In addition, however, to incidents of sport, there is an interest—historical, traditional, and romantic—which closely allies the Essex forests with the names of the queens from Boadicea to Victoria.

There can scarcely be a Londoner who does not know something of Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, and of the wrongs inflicted upon that ancient British queen and her daughters by the brutal Roman soldiery. Thousands of people going to or

from the city daily pass the statue erected to her memory at the corner of Westminster Bridge; many perhaps recall Tennyson's stirring lines, as they gaze at the figure of

> Queen Boädicea standing loftily charioted,

between the bowed forms of her weeping daughters; but how few of the thousands of London's forest ramblers who annually tread the green-sward of Epping Forest realise the historical connection of the district with the warrior queen.

Here, beneath the ground, leaf-strewn and mossy, their bones long mingled with the soil, sleep tens of thousands of the queen's brave British warriors, with their wives and families, their priests and their animals mingled in one common slaughter.

It will be remembered that a temporary success had attended the queen's impassioned call to arms to avenge the insults heaped upon her and hers, and all the Roman stations within reach were reduced to ashes. Colchester, the ancient Roman Camulodunum, surrounded by her wooded heights and falsely deeming herself secure, was the first to fall. Then through the depths of primeval forest and across its wide heaths travelled the victorious avenging host, carrying fire and sword to every Roman garrison between Colchester and London; but on the approach of the Roman legions under Suetonius, the queen fell back upon the forest, and

there on high ground, amidst its wild recesses, strongly entrenched herself against the might of Rome.

About a mile south of the present town of Epping is an ancient camp known as Amesbury or Ambres-

AMBRESBURY BANKS, NEAR EPPING.

bury Banks where, in the opinion of many, and according to local belief, the ill-fated Boadicea made her last stand. Experts have proved the camp to be a purely British entrenchment as distinct from a Roman fortification. Many rude pieces of British handiwork have been found to warrant its association with that ancient people.

The eminent Essex antiquary, Smart Lethieullier, could "find no reason to attribute this entrenchment either to the Romans, Saxons, or Danes," and therefore concluded that it was either the site of a British oppidum, or in some other way connected with the Britons. Since his day it has been proved conclusively to have been a camp.

Considering that no other entrenchments exist in the neighbourhood with the exception of a smaller one found of late years at Loughton, and which probably served as an auxiliary to the Epping one, about two miles away, local tradition appears to have everything in its favour. On the other hand, the absence of funeral barrows, or other marks of interment in this part of the forest, has been accepted by some as evidence that a great slaughter, such as that which overtook the British host under Boadicea, could scarcely have happened here. Morant, the Essex historian of the seventeenth century, is "persuaded that the field of battle was between Waltham and Epping or thereabouts," and the high ridge known as Epping Upland, three miles from Amesbury Banks, has been suggested as a likelier spot for the closing horrors of that disastrous day.

Down by the Cobbin brook, tradition localises the scene of the queen's tragic and sudden end. The little stream, which bubbles along its course below Epping Upland to-day, as it probably did in

the year A.D. 61, may indeed have caught the last low sob of the grief-stricken Boadicea, and have softly murmured a tender requiem for the broken-hearted British queen.

A thousand and five years passed away. Near to where the little Cobbin brook joins the river Lea—but two miles from the scene of Boadicea's death—had sprung up the Saxon dwelling in the wood, Waltham. Within its noble minster, the pride of King Harold, tragic grief held sway; for the Conqueror had invaded the land. Eadyth-of-the-Swans-Neck wept over the dead body of her lord, the last of the Saxon kings, and after the obsequies retired from the notice of the world into the seclusion of the cloister.

Eleven miles south of Waltham, as the crow flies, was enacted further scenes which marked the close of the Saxon dynasty. In the famous nunnery of Barking there ruled a Saxon princess, the abbess Aelgiva. With her, if tradition speak true, was the Princess Matilda, the sister of Edgar the Atheling, and Saxon princesses though they were, they had to play hostess to the Conqueror, and later witness the fealty of Saxon nobles to William, when Matilda saw her brother make his peace with the Norman, and forfeit all claim to the crown of England.

The interest attaching to Waltham Abbey from its association with the kings is paralleled by the

connection of Barking Abbey with the queens. From the time of its foundation in early Saxon days princesses were educated within its walls and queens sat in the abbess's chair. Among royal ladies who ruled Barking Abbey was the founder's sister, the Princess Ethelburgha, daughter of Abbas, King of East Anglia; Oswyth, the daughter of the King of Northumbria; Ethelburgh, the queen, and Cuthburgh, the sister of Ina, a King of the West Saxons. In later Saxon times, Elfrida, the queen of Edgar, and mother of Ethelred, was abbess, and following her in Ethelred's reign came Queen Alftrudis.

Unlike the famous establishment at Waltham, Barking did not suffer any temporary loss by the invasion of Duke William, but continued in royal favour, and held as proud a position under the Norman kings as it had under the old régime. Among royal Norman ladies who were educated and ruled at Barking were four Mauds. Maud (in Norman, Matilda), the queen of Henry the First; Maud, or Matilda, her successor, the consort of the usurper Stephen; Maud, the daughter of King Henry the Second; and Maud, the natural daughter of King John.

To Queen Maud, or Matilda, the consort of King Henry the First, is due the honour of having built the first stone bridge erected in England. The southern boundary of the forest was its site, for it spanned the river Lea at Stratford.

The queen had undertaken her annual pilgrimage to the shrine of "Our Ladye of Berkynge." Barking Abbey was at that time reached from the metropolis by the ancient Roman road which ran from Mile End across the heaths of Bethnal Green, thence to Leyton, and by the South of Wanstead to Ilford. The river Lea was forded at a spot midway between Stratford and Hackney, which was known as the Old Ford, and has since given the name to the locality. Now it chanced that the queen found the ancient ford in a state of flood, and her attendants failed to conduct their royal mistress safely over. According to an old chronicler, the queen was "well washed," and her discomfiture bred the decision to build a bridge. But Old Ford was not the site chosen. There was another ford farther to the east which opened up communication with Stratford Langthorne and the ancient parish of West Ham, and at this spot the queen's bridge of stone was erected. Leland says it was "arched like unto a bowe, a rare piece of work, for before that time the like had never before been seen in England." The bridge gave its name to the district which, known at first as Stratford-at-the-Bow, became in time disassociated from Stratford and was called Bow.

The second Maud, or Matilda, the unfortunate consort of Stephen, in addition to her connection with Essex as Abbess of Barking, has further

associations with the forestal county. When her namesake the empress, daughter of the preceding queen, landed in England to contest the crown, and civil war ravaged the country, two powerful Essex barons, De Vere and his brother-in-law, De Mandeville, espoused the cause of the queen, and reaped respectively the created earldoms of Oxford and Essex. Stephen at the time was a prisoner closely confined, and his queen sought refuge with De Vere in his castle at Hedingham, beyond the Stanstrete in the north part of the forest. But Matilda was destined never to leave its sheltering walls. She contracted a fever of which she died in May of 1151.

The whole cause of the Barons' War with King John is attributed by the worthy monks of the Priory of Little Dunmow to an Essex lady, Matilda the Fair, daughter of the Lord Fitzwalter. "King John," they write in their chronicles, "coveting the fair and precious lady, and her father not consenting to his unlawful desires, that occasioned a war between him and his barons." During her father's banishment from England, Matilda, whose charms had wrought such havoc with King John's heart, abode still at Dunmow. "A messenger came to her under pretence of love," continued the monks in their narrative, "and because she would not consent, poisoned all her liquors, and so she died."

There is, however, a stirring alternative as to the fate of Matilda offered by the tradition that she was

" Maid Marian," the queen of the May, and wife of bold Robin Hood. No great surprise need be felt at this bold traditional assertion which thus connects the outlaw chief of Sherwood Forest with the forest of Essex. The sphere of operations conducted by Robin extended over the entire country, though controlled from the base at Sherwood. His Lincoln-green associates, with their astounding agility, would quickly overcome the paltry hundred odd miles separating the two forests, for three mots wound upon a horn, " Wa-sa-hoa! " were sufficient to ensure a shower of grey-goose shafts, whizzing with unerring aim and deadly effect among hired rogues or cut-throats attacking any one under the protection of the generous Robin. What wonder then that the king of outlaws—believed to have been the Earl of Huntingdon—discovered the royal plot against Matilda, unprotected at Dunmow, and decided to rescue her from her fate, or that she wisely preferred the manly wooing of a bold and chivalrous outlaw to the degrading overtures of the licentious John. Regard for the sanctity of wedlock is believed to be the reason *primâ facie* for the institution of that interesting and time-honoured custom—the claiming of a gammon of bacon at Dunmow as a material reward for an exemplary year and a day of married life — a function which has now degenerated into a farce.

At Havering-atte-Bower, near to the palace used

by the kings of England from the Confessor to Charles the First, was another royal house, known as Pirgo. It was part of the estate which Edward the Second bestowed in dower upon Queen Isabella, and formed an asylum for the widowed queens of England. Its situation among dense woods, whose copious verdure made it a veritable Bower, has suggested the possibility that it was indeed *the* "Bower" where Henry the Second placed his first wife, Rosamund Clifford. Though it is quite possible that the Fair Rosamund lived with Henry at Havering previous to his marriage with Eleanor, the widow of Louis VII. of France, the belief that the woods of Havering contained the Bower where the queen afterwards discovered her beautiful rival appears to have grown simply from an association of name.

Here, at a beautiful spot called the Queen's Parlour, the spirit of Queen Joanna is said to haunt the glades. Two royal Joans spent the last days of their life at Havering: Joan, the widow of Llewellyn, Prince of North Wales, and daughter to King John; and Joan, the widow of Henry the Fourth. At Havering, too, lived the widow of Richard the Second. Her parents, the King and Queen of France, in anxiety for her safety, sent nobles to Havering to see how she fared. The visitors found her living in queenly state, surrounded by her ladies, and apparently happy. When they called

upon King Henry, they were further assured. "Tell them that sent you," said the monarch, who had driven Richard from the throne, "that the queen shall never suffer the smallest harm or any disturbance, but keep up a state and dignity becoming her birth and rank; and enjoy all her rights. For young as she is she ought not yet to be made acquainted with the changes in this world." And so the girl queen of Richard the Second continued to live in peaceful retirement at Havering.

During the succeeding hundred and thirty years nothing calls for special mention. The visits of the queens of England to Essex during that period are unmarked by any particular interest, but, during the reign of Henry the Eighth, the forest of Essex became the theatre of events which have left their mark upon the history of the country.

The veil of uncertainty which hangs over the exact birthplace of the Lady Anne Boleyn admits of no definite assertion that Rochford Hall, Essex, can rightly claim that honour, though such a statement is frequently made by writers of the county. The Hall was certainly the home of the Boleyns at one period, and was no doubt a favourite residence of Sir Thomas, Anne's father, for the title of Rochford was chosen by him when he was raised by Henry the Eighth to the peerage. His promotion was, of course, due to the monarch's infatuation for the beautiful and witty Anne, a Maid of Honour

to Queen Catharine. When the schemes of the great Cardinal Wolsey had caused the Lady Anne's banishment from court, many opportunities were afforded the royal lover to press forward his suit under cover of hunting expeditions. Accompanied by his buckhounds and hawks the royal huntsman sought his fair captivator wherever she chanced to be in residence. Many a pleasant day's hunting, therefore, was enjoyed by Sir Thomas in the king's company; many a royal falcon sped on its mission of destruction for the entertainment of Anne.

The only mansion remaining to Essex with memories of both the king and the Boleyns is New Hall, near Chelmsford. It lies on the opposite side of Chelmsford to where Writtle Park, the ancient royal chase, is situated, and became Sir Thomas Boleyn's property through his wife. Whether or no the amorous monarch sought and found the fair object of his affections at New Hall, it is certain that he was so enchanted with its situation that Sir Thomas, with an eye to future royal favours, placed the estate at the king's disposal. There appears very little doubt that New Hall—re-named Beaulieu—witnessed some of Henry's courtship with Anne. Her brother at that time was in great favour with the king, and was appointed, among other offices of a similar nature, keeper of the palace and park at Beaulieu, and became the First Master of his Majesty's Privy or Household Pack of Buck-

hounds, an office as important as the Hereditary Mastership of Buckhounds. The king, therefore, when joining the hunt under his Master of Hounds, was continually meeting Anne, whose skill on horseback and in the chase was remarkable, and won the royal lover's open admiration.

When state affairs and the duties of his kingly office made Henry an unwilling absentee from Anne's environment, he wrote to her, and much effusion was expressed in the royal letters. One of these alludes to the astronomical phenomenon that the heat of the sun is greatest when that orb is farthest from the earth, with the expected inference —" so it is with our love." Another letter ran: " That you may think of me the oftener, I send you a buck killed with my own hand, hoping that when you eat of it you will remember the hunter."

For five years Anne withstood the royal importunities, for her knowledge of court life and gossip kept her in no ignorance of the fact that she was not the only lady in Essex to whom that lascivious king paid his attentions. The scenes of Henry's amours are placed at Blackmore, Shenfield, Roxwell, and Margaretting. Each of these places is situated within easy reach of the boundaries of Waltham Forest in Tudor times. Blackmore lies between North Weald near Ongar, and South Weald near Brentwood, in what may justly be called the Weald of Essex, a district marked in old

maps as densely wooded. Through the village of Blackmore flows a little stream, the river Can, which is locally called " The Jordan "; and beyond it lies an estate, which receives the Biblical name of " Jericho." It appears that when Henry wished to be lost in the company of certain ladies, the courtiers would remark in jest that " the king had gone to Jericho," and Blackmore has retained the name for that reason. Here lived the beautiful widow of Sir Gilbert Tailbois. In time she presented Henry with a son, whom the king named Fitzroy. The boy gave great promise, and his father was passionately fond of him. He was loaded with dignities, but to Henry's extreme regret, he died on reaching maturity.

At East Ham is an old house, partly hidden from the public gaze by a high wall, on which is a small embattled tower, locally called Anne Boleyn's Castle. The place wears an historic, old-world air, with something of mystery and secrecy surrounding it. That it was the residence of Anne is the general belief. Some have affirmed that the place was built expressly for Anne by her royal lover, in order that from its windows, which commanded a view of the river, Anne might note the goings and comings of the royal barge at Greenwich. Though there is nothing to support this belief, it is quite possible that Anne may have stayed there. When she was queen she preferred Greenwich to all the royal

houses, and must frequently have crossed to the marshes round East Ham to indulge in the sport which the district afforded for hawking. The old house could therefore have been a resting-place for Anne, and her name would become associated with it. It is known that its interior was once fitted up with quite royal magnificence, though many have doubted whether the house is as old as the time of Henry.

Unfortunately, nothing remains of the house at Waltham to which the triumphant lover conducted Anne after his progress with her through the country. Its historic interest would be great, for here it was that Cranmer gave his famous opinion with regard to Henry's divorce from Queen Catharine. Neither are there any traces of the royal hunting-place called Poteles, or Longford Palace, which stood at the bottom of where Palmerston Road, Buckhurst Hill, is now, a spot which Anne must have frequently visited while staying with the king at Waltham. Frequent excursions were made by the pair into the forest—Anne mounted on a magnificent palfrey, the cynosure of all eyes, the king delighted as a schoolboy to exhibit his skill as a marksman for her applause. In his eagerness, one day, he shot the tame doe of an old woman resident in the forest, but discovering his mistake, he generously compensated her with seven shillings and sixpence.

But the story of happy days spent by the pair in

Waltham Forest has a tragic sequel. When Henry's affections were stolen by the Lady Jane Seymour, he opened his ears to the tongue of slander and ordered the trial of the queen. Lord Rochford, the Master of Hounds, was implicated with his sister the queen in their supposed common guilt, which perjured witnesses and biassed judges pronounced judgment upon, and Rochford laid down his life on Tower Hill on May 17, 1536. Two days later and the beauteous head of Anne the queen lay bleeding beside the block, while the cannon of the Tower roared the news to the callous husband, listening, it is said, expectantly, in the Essex forest, where Anne and he had so often hunted.

About sixteen miles in direct line from the royal palace of Beaulieu, eleven from the palace of Havering, and twenty from the Tower of London is the little village of Horndon-on-the-Hill, where for generations the inhabitants have firmly held the belief that in a broken black marble monument attached to the wall of their little red brick church reposed some of the remains of the unfortunate queen.

Horndon rests its faith on the possibility that after Anne's execution her body was removed secretly at night from the Tower, for interment in a place of less grim associations. The last resting-place of Anne is shrouded in mystery more deep than that which surrounds her birthplace. It is impossible that the small tomb referred to could

at any time have contained her body, and therefore it is suggested that here was placed her head, or perhaps her heart; though why at Horndon, or by whom, it is impossible to say.

The rustics of Horndon, to their credit be it said, do not, like those of Blickling in Norfolk, support their belief of Anne's sepulchre in their midst by ghost stories. No vision of a spirit queen, seated within a phantom coach with her decapitated head in her lap, appears in the quiet street, nor is the rustle of Anne's ghostly garments heard on the anniversary of her execution.

Anne Boleyn's child, the Princess Elizabeth, for some years received every attention which the succeeding queens were able to afford her; but after Queen Catherine Howard had been disgraced and executed, Elizabeth was sent to live with her sister in the ancient royal house at Havering-atte-Bower. No sympathetic feeling, however, sprang from the common calamity of the step-sisters, and Mary's dislike of her younger sister grew with age. They frequently separated, frequently changed their place of abode. Mary's favourite residence was Beaulieu, the New Hall, near Chelmsford, which her father had enlarged and greatly improved. Mary was but seventeen years of age when she was commanded to lay aside her title and dignity of princess and leave the royal house for Hertford Castle. She afterwards returned, but her life at

Beaulieu was viewed with distrust by the Privy Council of Edward the Sixth; hints that the air of Essex was not good for her were made in the hope that her court at Beaulieu would be discontinued. But Mary clung to Essex. While the subject of her devotional services was being considered by the council, Mary took residence in the south of the forest at the old manor house of Wanstead, called Naked Hall Hawe. From here she rode the six miles to London to discuss her religious differences with her royal brother.

The concluding scenes of the religious contention were destined, however, to be enacted in another forest mansion some miles away from Wanstead. In the thickly wooded country between Epping and Waltham was a noble seat called Copt or Copped Hall—a mansion of the same name still occupies the site—which had been the property of the Abbots of Waltham. Henry the Eighth acquired it by an exchange of land, and thither Mary now removed. In the beautiful private chapel which belonged to the mansion Mary continued her services in the Roman Catholic faith. Remonstrance was useless. The king sent for the comptroller of her household and forbade mass to be held, but with no better result. Several officers of her house were then imprisoned. Still Mary was undaunted. Finally Edward sent a deputation to her.

Headed by the Lord Chancellor Rich, the cavalcade rode down into the forest, and appeared before the erring princess. Their mission was fruitless, beyond establishing the fact of Mary's staunch

COPT HALL, NEAR EPPING.

adherence to Rome. She could only promise to be her brother's "true subject in all things, except in these matters of religion toucheing the Masse and the newe service." The gentlemen remounted. Soon the forms of the unsuccessful deputation in the cause of Protestantism were lost to view in the

glades of the forest, and from " her poore house at Copped Hall " Mary penned her reply to the king.

During the " thirteen days of Lady Jane Grey," Mary retired from her forest dwellings to Norfolk. When her friends proclaimed her queen, and she travelled towards London to ascend the throne, she turned at once to her favourite Beaulieu. Twenty-two years previously in that house she had been denied the title of princess; she now trod its courts as Queen of England. From Beaulieu Mary came to the seat of Sir William, afterwards Lord Petre, at Ingatestone, near Brentwood. Sir William, a staunch Roman Catholic, was Mary's Secretary of State, an office which he had held under the Protestant Edward, as well as under the father, and afterwards maintained in the reign of Elizabeth. He was one of the deputation which waited upon Mary in her forest home at Copt Hall near Epping. His spacious park at Ingatestone, which had once formed part of the forest of Brentwood, was later, in Stuart times, noted as the haunt of a herd of pure white deer.

The neighbourhood of Brentwood has further memories of Mary, for Weald Hall, situated in a delightfully wooded district, became a royal seat, where the queen sought recreation from the cares of state.

South Weald Church rises from a churchyard of such floral beauty that it appears set in the midst

of a rose garden. Its lychgate, porch, and walls are covered with a wealth of rambler roses and creepers, which in summer produce a picture which attracts hundreds of visitors.

COTTAGES AND CHURCH, SOUTH WEALD.

The queen often worshipped here; and the doorway in the churchyard wall, through which Mary passed to her private grounds adjoining, is still shown. But Mary the queen, attending divine service in this peaceful spot, is also for South Weald Mary the persecutor, Bloody Mary. Behind the

church, and almost hidden from sight by trees, is a tower, commanding a view for miles over undulating woodland. It is asserted that from this tower Mary watched the burning of Brentwood's martyr, the young William Hunter, to whom there is a monument in the High Street, while a huge and decayed old oak trunk is pointed out as the stake to which the victim was tied.

When Mary left Ingatestone on her progress to London, she next stayed at Wanstead. The old manor house, with its memories of religious difficulties, became a temporary court, while preparations were pushed forward for the entry into London. To Wanstead came Elizabeth at the head of a train of knights and ladies to greet her royal sister, and offer with as good a grace as was possible her congratulations and allegiance to one who hated her.

Though Mary's name is thus so closely associated with the Essex forests, she has left behind her no pleasing stories of the chase. Cold, morose, and forty when she ascended the throne, and soon engaged in the bitter persecutions of her reign (which Essex has good cause to remember), it would appear that the deep baying of the hound, the music of the horn, or the jingle of bells on the hoods of the falcons stirred her to no enthusiasm.

Far different was it with Elizabeth. She had inherited her parents' love of sport, and could

endure the fatigues of the chase. Consequently, when she became queen at the age of twenty-five, she used the forests, chases, and parks of Essex more than any other queen before or since. Even when well advanced in years, her devotion to sport was keen. "Every second day," remarks a writer of that time, "she is on horseback and continues the sport long," much to the discomfort of her attendant ladies, who frequently wished that those who envied them their position as Maids to the queen could experience some of their trials. Constantly travelling from one royal residence to another, or paying visits to her favourite lords, Elizabeth enjoyed a continual round of activities.

"This is the queen whom never eye yet viewed
But streight the hart was forst thereby to yeelde."

is the testimony of a forest poet, George Gascoigne, a native of Walthamstow. The devotion of Essex lords to their queen manifested itself in various ways. They vied with each other in magnificent preparations for the chase, in the production of sports of all kinds, including bear-baiting, and in quaint and often fantastic reproductions of out-door plays.

Scarcely a forest mansion that does not hold some memory of the virgin queen, but of all places within the present forest area none is so replete with historical interest as that of Wanstead Park.

The reason is not far to seek. Apart from the fact that the old manor house of Wanstead lay within easy reach of the royal palaces, at London, Greenwich, and Havering-atte-Bower, it had, soon after the accession of Elizabeth, become the home of her first favourite, the noted Earl of Leicester.

In the month of May, A.D. 1568, Elizabeth graced Leicester's house with a visit of several days' duration, when a pastoral drama, written specially by Sir Philip Sydney, was acted for her entertainment. The story lent itself well to out-of-door treatment, and Wanstead Hall was an ideal spot for its reproduction.

As the queen walked in the garden with its background of woods, she was accosted by a woman "attired like an honest man's wife of the country," who proved to be the first of the *dramatis personæ* of the piece. The woman solicited the queen's assistance in the settling of the following interesting dilemma.

Her daughter, the fairest maiden of the forest district, had two lovers: one a shepherd, the other a forester. The girl was unable to decide in favour of either, liking them both equally well. The rivalry between the two young men had assumed serious proportions, and the damsel was greatly distressed in consequence. As proof of the mother's story, sounds of altercation were heard in the neighbouring forest, and from its shade appeared

the rival lovers with the fair subject of their dispute. They were accompanied by half-a-dozen men of their own calling, foresters and shepherds, both young and old. With them came the village schoolmaster, who endeavoured to arbitrate between the opposing parties, and was treated with but scant ceremony and courtesy for his pains. On reaching the spot where the queen stood, "one of the substantiallest shepherds" became spokesman for the party. "Making a leg or two," which placed him in front of his comrades, "old father Lalus" respectfully besought Her Majesty "to give a little superfluous intelligence" to their perplexity.

Here before her was "a certain shee creature, which we shepherds call a woman." It was true she had "a minsical countenance"; but—with a flattering allusion to the queen's personal attractions, which always ensured Elizabeth's good humour—"by my white lamb," gallantly averred the old shepherd, "not three-quarters so beauteous as yourself." Well, the said "shee creature" had "disannulled the brain-pan" of these two, their "feastioust young men," with results which were a sore puzzle to them all. Unable to adequately express so intricate a problem, he appealed to the schoolmaster to continue the thread of the story.

The pedagogue, Master Rhombus, after "many special graces" thus began: "Now the thunder-

thumping Jove, transfund his dotes into your excellent formosities which have with your resplendent beams thus segregated the enmitie of these rural animals." The rest of his speech he embellished with a plentiful admixture of Latin, the purport of which was that he had used his best endeavour to settle this "sanquinolent fray," but had been treated like a "Pecorius Asinus."

The maiden, tired of his Latin, bade him cease, and having silenced him, she stated her own case simply and well. She had been chosen Queen of the May by virtue of her beauty. But—another subtle flattery was here introduced—her own charms paled into insignificance before those of "the beautifullest lady these woods have ever received."

Her two lovers, different though they were, stood equal in her regard. Therion, the forester, stole venison for her, and performed various "prettier services"; but he would rage and rail, and sometimes even strike her. On the other hand, the shepherd, Espilus, though the richer man, never did her service, but also never hurt her by word or deed. Which, in the queen's judgment, was to be preferred as a matrimonial asset? "The many deserts, and many faults" of the livelier Therion, or "the very small deserts but no faults" of the more equable Espilus. To assist the queen to a decision the lovers would each urge his cause in song. The songs followed, succeeded by a discus-

sion by the men on the respective merits of the forester and the shepherd.

The schoolmaster then maintained a lively argument with the eldest representative of each side, and cried: "Throw your ears to me, for I am gravidated with childe, till I have indoctrinated your plumbeous cerebrosities." But after an argument of great length matters were no nearer a solution, and the May Queen appealed to Her Majesty to give her decision. The queen was pleased to pass judgment in favour of the gentle shepherd; and the play was brought to a conclusion by the May Queen's pretty wish to her sovereign that, "henceforward the flourishing of May may long remain in you and with you." Thus in the days of Good Queen Bess was life made merry at Wanstead, on the self-same spot where now the only players are those interested in the game of golf.

When all England was stirred by the approach of the mighty Armada, the ancient forestal palace of Havering-atte-Bower was chosen as a fitting retreat for the queen. The choice was Leicester's, for between the palace and the sea two armies were drawn up in defence of the capital. A specially picked guard of officers and men were appointed to protect the queen's person, "being the most dainty and sacred thing we have in this world to care for," as Leicester explained to her. But the

enforced inactivity was ill-suited to the high mettle of the queen. The beautiful sylvan Bower lost its charm amid the uncertainty of events and the menace to the kingdom. So the queen ordered her guard to accompany her to Tilbury, where Leicester was in command of a large force. Some doubt was expressed as to the wisdom of appearing in camp, but Elizabeth went boldly to her soldiers, and after explaining to them that her presence in Essex at this time was not for her sport or her recreation, she poured out her pent-up emotions in a stirring speech. With Spartan courage she refused to return to the protection and comforts of Havering, but chose instead to remain with her favourite among his troops.

Some distance from Tilbury, in the parish of Aveley, is a mansion called Belhus. In one of the bedrooms of this fine old house, the bed, furniture, and fittings are carefully preserved, for Belhus claims the distinction of having been the resting place of the queen the night preceding her spirited address to her army.

When Leicester's star had waned, his stepson, the young Earl of Essex, became the queen's first favourite. So completely did Essex fill the horizon of his royal mistress's indulgence that his arrogance brooked no interference, even at the queen's hands. His quarrel with Elizabeth was but the prelude to those subsequent follies and disobediences

which ended so disastrously for himself, and brought his queen to such a tragic deathbed.

A follower of the earl, Edmund Wiseman—who afterwards lived at Little Maplestead, the Saxon place of the maple trees, beyond the ancient Stanstrete—had been entrusted by the earl with the long-looked-for letter of supplication to the queen. For some reason he failed to deliver it. When his master was beheaded, Wiseman's remorse was very acute. To atone in some way for his fault, he hollowed out an oak trunk into a kind of bed-coffin, and in that he regularly slept until his death.

Near the toll-house at Woodford Wells, on the site where now is the Bancroft School, stood an old house which for many years did duty as the poor-house of the district. It was formerly the mansion of the Earl of Essex, of Elizabeth's day, used by him in order that he might be near his queen when she hunted in the forest, or stayed at Wanstead, Loughton, or other places near by.

Queen Elizabeth's hunting lodge at Chingford is one of the sights of the present forest. It is a timbered building of the Tudor period, and stands upon high ground overlooking Chingford Plain, beyond which, as far as the eye can see, stretches the forest—one undulating sweep of foliage in summer, one dark *ensemble* of branch and dusky underwood in winter.

A story has been handed down to the effect that

the virgin monarch usually rode her hunter up the stairs of the lodge and dismounted at the top.

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HUNTING-LODGE, CHINGFORD.

Considering that each stair is a solid piece of oak, of great width and breadth of "tread," and that the

ascent is gradual, being broken by six landings of good size, the equestrian performance of the queen is not only feasible, but to a horsewoman of Elizabeth's ability, scarcely to be regarded as a difficult one.

Chingford Lodge was one of many such lodges or "stands" from which the royal party shot at the herds of deer which were driven past. Fairmead Lodge, destroyed of late years, which stood near the Fairmead Oak, is believed to have been used for a similar purpose, and there were lodges in the Loughton, Leyton, and East Hainault Walks.

After the reign of Elizabeth, but more especially after that of James, the royal houses at Havering fell into a state of disrepair, and consequent decay. Pirgo or Pirgore remained till the eighteenth century, when both house and chapel were destroyed. The historic spot, hallowed by many memories of preceding queens, was visited one midsummer day by the queen of James—whose sporting reputation chiefly rests upon the fact that she once shot the king's favourite hound instead of the deer—who, with her husband and Prince Henry, came to gratify the curiosity and interest which the name of the place had aroused. But it was but the ghost of its former self, and soon after became so dilapidated that when Mary de Medicis, the mother of the queen of Charles the First, came through Essex on a visit to her royal daughter, the ancient

palace was not in a fit condition to receive her, and though Charles still honoured the venerable palace with his presence, the queen's mother was lodged with Lady Cooke at Gidea Hall, a short distance away.

The commissioners of Cromwell completed the ruin that time was hastening on. The worn-out edifice, a palace since the days of the Confessor, was so effectually destroyed that no trace of it remains. Its precise site is now a matter of some conjecture, a source of disappointment to many London cyclists who visit Havering-atte-Bower with the fond hope of discovering some ruins, but have to be content with an inspection of the church, and what is to many a real treat, the sight of the stocks *in situ* beside a huge elm trunk upon the village green.

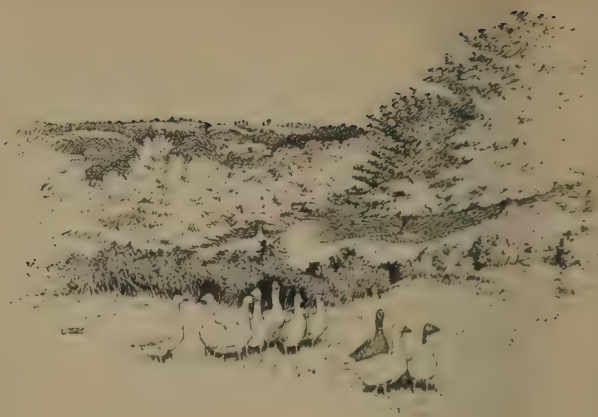
Though Queen Anne and the queens of the Georges occasionally visited the forest for sport or other purposes, their visits became fewer and fewer, and at last ceased. The sporting rights of the crown, no longer exercised, were eventually sold, except over a fraction of the forest, and led to the wholesale enclosure and destruction of many thousands of its acres. An appeal was made to Queen Victoria to enforce her forestal rights, where such rights had not been sold, and thus to preserve the forest in a wild and unenclosed condition.

A Royal Commission inquiry resulted in Parlia-

ment passing the Epping Forest Acts of the early seventies, by which the forest ceased to be a royal forest, and was entrusted to the corporation of the City of London for the use of the public.

On May 6, 1882, the queen, conducted by the newly appointed ranger, the Duke of Connaught, visited the forest for the purpose of declaring it open. In a spacious pavilion gay with cloth of gold and crimson, the queen was received by the Lord Mayor and civic officers, and listened to "the humble address of the Mayor and Commonalty and Citizens of the City of London Conservators of Epping Forest," in which it was stated that "as the capital of your Majesty's Empire is the largest in the World, it is fitting that its inhabitants should possess the most extensive pleasure ground."

The queen replied, "It gives me the greatest satisfaction to dedicate this beautiful forest to the use and enjoyment of my people for all time." The Lord Mayor then declared, in Her Majesty's name, that the forest was "open and dedicated to the delectation of the public for ever," and a young oak tree was planted to commemorate the great event.



CHAPTER IV

THE "FOREST OF ESSEX" BECOMES "EPPING FOREST"

The fault is great in man or woman
Who steals the goose from off the common.
But who can plead that man's excuse
That robs the common of the goose?

THE robbery of the ancient folk-lands of the Saxon, in the eleventh century, to form the forests for the king, and the return robbery of forest land by the commoners of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, form a subject worthy of consideration.

But twenty-five years separate the present secure condition of the forest acres from the wholesale and shameless robbery of forest land, which reduced

Epping Forest to a patchwork of encroachments, the work of those whose consciences approved of boldly enclosing some coveted plot.

The question of robbing common land resolved itself, some forty years ago, into an appeal from the commoners of Epping Forest, who were suddenly brought face to face with the threatened loss of their right to roam the forest unrestrained. Theirs was not a legal right, perhaps, but neither was the robbery of their ancient privileges legal, for the quaintness of old English law was expounded at the time by Sir W. Harcourt thus: "No one has a legal right to go upon a common, but if he chooses to go on, no one has a legal right to turn him off."

One of the earliest pen pictures of London and its forest is drawn by FitzStephen, who reveals a thriving city fringed by clearings and cultivated land, while beyond, as a background, "an immense forest extends itself, beautified with woods and groves, and full of the lairs and coverts of beasts and game, stags, bucks, bears, and wild boars."

This great forest of the East Saxons had, since the birth of the small kingdom of the Middle Saxons, become two. The river Lea, the boundary of the remaining kingdom of the East Sex—Essex—became the boundary also of its forest; and the great wooded belt which stretched onwards over the heights of Highgate and of Hampstead down to the city at Islington became the forest of Middle-

sex. The parent forest—that of Essex—was in great part royal demesne of the Saxon kings, and as such became the property of William of Normandy, and formed the nucleus from which grew the royal forest of the Plantagenets. Henry the First announced: "I have retained in my hands all forests in the same manner as they were held by my father." While there is nothing to show that all Essex was the forest of the Conqueror, Henry nevertheless found means of extending the existing forest until Essex, to its farthest bounds, was brought under the stringent forest laws.

Stephen, to strengthen his position among the nobles and people, promised to restore the land usurped by Henry. The forests of the Conqueror and of Rufus he agreed to reserve to himself, "but all the rest which King Henry hath superadded, I restore and grant, quit and discharged, to the churches and the kingdom."

The only lasting disafforestation of Stephen was that of the hundred of Tendring—the extreme easterly peninsula which lies between Colchester and the North Sea. For the rest, his concessions had no permanent effect upon the history of the forest, except that the increased number of enclosed parks around the new castles and baronial halls had—so wrote John of Salisbury—become "so common as to be at once a ridicule and a grievance."

Land so enclosed was still the recognised hunting

ground of the kings, and subjected to forest laws in Henry the Second's reign, for that monarch audaciously ignored the deforestings of Stephen; and Richard and John supported his action.

In 1204 King John disafforested the whole district lying north of the Bishops-Stortford to Colchester road, the old Roman military way known as the Stanstrete. This concession was the result of an appeal from the inhabitants of that part of Essex, who agreed to pay five hundred marks and present five palfreys to the king should their land be freed from forest laws. The great influence of the De Veres—Earls of Oxford and Hereditary Lord Great Chamberlains of England, in whose family was afterwards vested the office of Warden of the Forest—was considered responsible for the successful piloting of the agreement; and it was stated by the knights who perambulated the forest a century later, that the trans-Stanstrete division of Essex was disforested by purchase of the Earls of Oxford. A line drawn from Colchester to Nayland on the Suffolk border and thence down the river Stour to the sea, determined the boundary in the extreme north-eastern corner, while the residue of the county remained as before.

Forestal oppression was among the evils righted by the revolt of the barons under Fitzwalter, Castellan and Banneret of the City of London, and the disafforesting of those tracts of land brought

under forest law after the coronation of Henry the Second was promised in the Charter of Liberties. There was a strong possibility that the king would break his promises. Therefore, four days after the signing of the Magna Carta, writs were issued to the sheriff, the foresters, warreners, keepers of water-banks, and the bailiffs, for the election of twelve knights of the shire to inquire into the causes of complaints against the forest administration, and rectify the bounds and the laws. But matters were put off for ten years, owing to the war, the death of the king, and the minority of the young Henry III.

Meantime, the Charter of Forests, the Carta Forestæ, had been issued promising immediate redress; but it was recalled by the young monarch under the plea that, not being of age, he had not yet full power over the Great Seal. The attitude of the barons, however, forced the king to an immediate and decisive step. "Twelve lawful knights" were directed to make a correct perambulation and determine which parts of the county were to remain forest and which not, "according to the tenor of our Charter of Forest Liberties granted to our good men of England."

Hugo de Nevill, the king's justice, with his foresters in fee, the verderers, and the twelve chosen gentlemen, grappled with the problem very unsuccessfully. Choosing Chelmsford as a base of

operations, they divided the county into two almost equal parts, by the natural division formed by "the river flowing from Tyltey as far as Chelmaresford," from Chelmsford through Malden "as far as the Eastern sea, where the same river falls into the sea." The half county lying seawards of the river Chelmer they disafforested at one stroke. Then starting at the Chelmsford base, and turning Londonwards, they treated the whole district lying south of the Chelmsford-Stratford highway in a similar manner, the liberty of Havering only excepted. They had then disposed of three-quarters of the county. The remaining quarter they had no intention of leaving intact. The river Chelmer was not to be the eastern limit of the royal forest. Sixteen miles nearer London ran a small stream, the Ingreburn or Bourne Brook, which crossed the king's highway at the Delle-Bridge at Romford. This bridge was marked as the eastern boundary. From the bridge by a circuitous route through Navestock, down the river Roding to Abridge; across country to North Weald; and from thence by the boundary of the hundreds of Waltham and Harlow to the river Lea; down the river for the remainder of its course, and the bounds of the king's forest were determined.

Adding to this meagre portion the royal chases at Hatfield Regis in the west, of Felstead and Writtle in the centre, and the King's Wood at

Colchester in the east, they hastily brought their labours to an end, feeling that their conclusions were unsatisfactory, but pleading their "imbecility and the hardness of the task."

Needless to say the king did not agree with the decision of his "twelve lawful knights," and hastened to voice his objection to their finding. He refused to acknowledge the curtailed boundaries, firmly attesting that a great blunder had been made, and that the alleged afforestings of Henry the Second, which the knights had swept out of the forest bounds, were merely re-afforestings of ancient forest ground which, during the wars of Stephen, had not been claimed as forest. He therefore issued a writ to the sheriff to that effect, stating that the bounds should remain as in King John's reign, until otherwise decided by a new perambulation.

Twelve knights, as before, were elected to perambulate anew, and report their conclusion in a definite and concise form. They did so, to the king's entire satisfaction. Their report reads:—

"This is the perambulation in the county of Essex in the twelfth year of the reign of King Henry the Third," etc. "Except the hundred of Tendring," which "is beyond the forest, the residue of the county of Essex which was heretofore afforested, shall remain in the forest as it was aforetime."

The boundaries were thus definitely stated:—

"The forest of the Lord the King in the county of Essex, is included in metes and bounds from the bridge of Stratford unto the bridge of Cattywad in length, and in breadth from the Thames unto the King's highway, which is called Stanstrete."

The bridge of Cattywade crossed the river Stour, which divides Essex from Suffolk, and thus the entire length of the county, west to east, though not its entire breadth, north to south, was made forest. Tendring, before the end of Henry's reign, was again placed under forest laws, and with its neighbour the Lexden hundred, maintained the crown's officers: foresters, verderers, regarders, and woodwards.

Edward the First succeeded for nearly thirty years in warding off the importunate cry for reform, but the public voice had grown imperative. The barons rose against the illegal impositions, and compelled Edward to promise redress and observe the Forest Charters. The protest was a national one, affecting not Essex alone, but all the forestal counties of England. The famous perambulations of the year 1300, therefore, are the most important of all the Plantagenet period.

The knights chosen to perambulate the various counties met at Northampton during Michaelmas of the year 1299 to decide a plan of campaign—for campaign it was—against royal robbery and

encroachment. Because of the harvest, the knights deferred their visitation till the following spring. On 1st April they received the royal command to commence, and report the result of their investigations.

The knights of 1300 based their investigations in Essex upon the report of 1225; their object being to confine the limits of the royal forest to the south-western division of the county, as was mapped out by the knights of the preceding perambulations.

Commencing at the nearest point to London, Queen Matilda's bridge at Stratford-atte-Bowe, they marked the bridge as the gateway of the forest. From Stratford, the king's highway through Ilford towards Romford formed a boundary till the liberty of Havering was reached. The boundary of the liberty was followed towards the Thames, which brought the knights to Rainham Creek, where the Ingerburn flows into the Thames.

Rainham is to-day an interesting little village with a well-preserved Norman church, and a residence of the late Stuart period, built as a perfect cube in plan and elevation with a carved wooden porch, supported by Corinthian pillars of wood, seen through a good specimen of wrought-iron gateway. From Rainham, the knights returned to the king's highway at Dellebridge, thereby bounding the royal forest south of the Chelmsford road.

Following the stream, which separated the

vills of Havering and South Weald, they came to that part of Navestock now known as Navestock Side. Navestock, it is thought, was once called Nasing, the word "stock" being added because the district showed the remains of felled timber, and also as a distinguishing appellation to the Nasing -also in the forest—beyond Epping. A mark of royal favour was shown to Navestock in Edward the Second's reign, for the purveyors to the royal household were prevented from taking corn within its bounds.

Queen Mary, who lived at South Weald near by, gave Navestock to Edward Waldegrave, a gentleman of her household, and appointed him lieutenant of the forest, as a reward for his faithful services. His descendants, the Earls Waldegrave, have monuments in the little church.

The Waldegraves were settled in England, though not in Essex, before the Conquest, and John de Waldegrave was one of many despoiled of their possessions by the Conqueror. Among William's followers was a Waldegrave, who, fortunately for John, became known to him. The namesakes conferred together and discovered a relationship. A compact was then made and successfully carried out whereby the German Waldegrave promised to obtain the Conqueror's pardon, and restitution of his relative's land, on condition that John's only daughter should be given him in marriage.

Navestock to-day has only a strip of common land to recall its once forestal nature. It is an outlying, straggling district, whose units lie disjointed and wide apart, with its church hidden beside a wood and difficult to find.

The perambulating knights, on leaving Navestock, kept to the left bank of the Roding, and followed it to the bridge, "Passingfordebregge," over which ran the ancient road from London to Suffolk. Two roads converge upon Passingford Bridge, the old one from Havering, a newer one from Abridge, and since the bridge is extremely narrow, a notice requests travellers not to cause an obstruction by loitering there with their machines, though the view from the bridge toward the old watermill is always enticing, and the stretch of water between the bridge and the mill which dams back the stream, affords a pleasant fishing ground for a few devoted anglers.

Still following the left bank of the Roding, the knights came to Abridge, fourteen miles from London, a quaint little village built on one side of the stream in such a compact form as to suggest the idea of defence. Char-a-bancs from London visit it in summer, though now it is some distance from the forest.

At Abridge—"Affebregge," the knights spelt it—they crossed the river for the first time, and followed the road, once the main London to Harlow

road, to Theydon Bois. They left the road at the

PASSINGFORD BRIDGE AND WATER-MILL.

church, not the present structure which stands beyond the railroad at the corner of the forest, but

the old building which stood on the hill, where now are only a few graves to mark the site, skirted the rector's wood, and came by "Sprigges" lane to "Eppyngheth," marking a house there as a boundary.

From Epping—not the present village known to thousands of travellers on the main London road, but the old Epping, two miles away upon the "Upland"—the knights came "straight to the head of the wood called 'Old Wyntre.'" Wintry wood in the lower forest of to-day lies in the angle formed by the roads from Ongar and Harlow which meet at Epping, though once the only road, that to Harlow, cut through its midst.

Leaving Old Wyntre wholly within the bounds of the royal forest, the knights came to the "Gernonneswode," the wood of the Gernon family, who gave their name to Theydon Gernon, as the Bois did to that of Theydon Bois adjoining. The name Theydon perpetuates the memory of De Theydon, a verderer, whose daughter and heiress married a Gernon, and joined their estates and names. Theydon is a wide district in undulating country, with beautiful well-wooded parks to recall its once forestal nature. Theydon Bois—always pronounced "boys"—has its church, its village and its railway station. Theydon Gernon and Theydon Mount have no village proper of their name, though each possesses a church, a manor house, and some

cottages. Near them both, at a junction of roads, is a Theydon with an alien name. The place obtained such a reputation in the forest district from the excellence of the ale brewed by one Cooper of "The Merry Fiddlers," that the name Coopersale unblushingly stares from sign-posts, and has quite eclipsed the older name of Theydon.

The wood of the Gernons the knights of 1300 placed without the forest, and proceeded towards Ongar, marking "the Reodegate" in North Weald as a boundary with the object of placing Ongar without the forest, though within the purlieus.

Ongar, a picturesque village twenty miles from London, is a favourite rendezvous for many cyclists. There clings to Ongar an old-world air heavy with memories of many great and varied personalities, such as John Locke the Christian philosopher; Bishop Newton; Dr. Stubbs, the historian; the great David Livingstone, who prepared while at Ongar for his missions abroad, and knew the forest well, from his cross-country walks between Ongar and London; the boy who became Lord Beaconsfield, and rode his pony into the quiet village; and the Taylor family, the authors of many hymns, and "Twinkle, twinkle little star."

Ongar has also memories of its ancient Saxon market, its Norman castle, the home of De Lucy the Loyal, while at Greenstead church, within a

nave built of forest trees, the memory of the martyred King Edmund is enshrined.

Ongar and the district beyond it continued in the purlieus of the forest until the Civil Wars. Sir Richard Munchstow at the Justice Seat of 1630 put in a claim to hold High Ongar Park without the regard, though having pulled down the fence the forest deer had free access to his park. The ranger complained of this and of Sir Richard's threat to "shoutte my dodges and sue me in the Star Chamber," should he hunt the park. The Bishops of London at one time held High Ongar Park during the king's pleasure.

On the south side of the Stanstrete, and bordering that ancient highway for a considerable distance between Bishops Stortford and Dunmow, lay the royal chase of Hatfield Regis. Regis proclaimed not only that the chase was royal demesne, but served to distinguish the place from Hatfield Peverel on the Colchester road near Witham. "It remains wholly in the forest," is the report of the knights, as also the hamlet of "La Walle" and the "Monckenewood" on the county boundary beyond Hatfield Heath. To add Heath to Hatfield is to emphasise unnecessarily the former heathy nature of the district, for Hatfield itself means the heath pasture, a remnant of which, a wide village green, affords common of pasture for the villagers' cattle.

At Hatfield, as at Writtle, land was held by the sergeancy of keeping the king's woods at those places. Among holders of this office were the Bruce of Scotland, the Earls of Bohun, and Thomas of Woodstock. The office of keeper of Hatfield Chase was vested in the family of the Barringtons, the present lords of the manor. A Barrington was sheriff in the fifteenth century. When he died his wife survived him by but one day, a fact quaintly set forth in the following couplet:—

> "He first deceased, she for a few hours try'd
> To live without him, lik'd it not, and dy'd."

When Hatfield ceased to be a royal chase, it lost its regal appellation and took instead the name of "Broad-oak" from an ancient "Doodle-oke" marked on old maps in the depths of the forest. To-day the place aspires to the name of Hatfield Town. A few charming old houses in a dilapidated condition speak of former greatness. The church recalls memories of the Priory and its monks.

Hatfield's appearance on old maps wrongfully bespoke population and prosperity. Soldiers quartered there upon a march experienced both surprise and disgust to find on arrival but three mean ale-houses.

In the centre of the county the perambulating knights of 1300 concerned themselves with but two places, Writtle and Felstead. Writtle, near

Chelmsford, was a royal chase, and therefore remained in the forest. Some interesting customs long remained to Writtle. The tenants living round the Green were required by their lord to pay Green Silver—a fine of one halfpenny for the privilege of having a door opening on to the green. "Leepe and Lasse" was a tax demanding fourpence for all vehicles passing through the manor of Greenbury. Tenants of the manor, whose land joined that of their lord, were entitled by a custom called Frampole Fence to repair their side of the common fence by lopping, for the purpose, the branches of all trees growing along the fence which could be reached with the axe from the top of the fence.

At Felstead, ten miles due north of Writtle, certain woods which the Conqueror had granted to the Abbess of Caen the knights declared to be within the forest. They then passed on to Colchester to determine the extent of forest existing round that ancient and historic borough.

From the "Northbregge" the forest extended a mile outwards and included "the whole vill of Myland"—Mile End, the King's Wood, heath, and hatch, and the space enclosed by the boundary line of "the vills of Horkeleye, Bexsted, and Kynggeswode" back to "the Estbrigge" and "all the vill of Colcestre within the walls, with all the demesnes of the Lord the King to his castle of Colcestre belonging."

Among Constables of Colchester Castle was the famous Hubert de Burgh, who is believed to have advised the king to increase the forest bounds. Brentwood, twenty miles from London on the main London to Colchester road, claims to be the scene of De Burgh's refuge and subsequent arrest in the parish church, and of the spirited refusal by the blacksmith to forge fetters for such a noble prisoner.

Colchester Castle was for a brief period during the barons' war with King John in the custody of the Bishop of London. Munfichet, of Magna Carta fame, was Constable of Colchester Castle, and during his tenure of office appropriated to his own use hens and eggs which the foresters of the district claimed at Christmas and Easter.

No castellan, according to the charter of forests, could "hold Pleas of the Forest, whether concerning Vert or Venison." Exactions by constables of castles were common previous to Henry the Fourth's reign, for many of them who were also Justices abused their office by apprehending persons they disliked, and imprisoning them within their castles until ransom was paid.

A boisterous raid in the forest round Colchester, which reads like cattle-lifting, occurred in 1334. A certain William de Impshall and his associates chased the cattle of the commoners from the King's Wood to the castle. The foresters who complained

of their action were not concerned with motives, but the injury caused by such a cattle drive to both the deer and the forest.

In the year 1267, an incident of the keenest interest occurred in Colchester, proving that the Jews there were not only on friendly terms with the inhabitants, but were willing and eager to mingle in their sports. According to the report entered on the Forest Rolls for that year, it appears that a doe, startled in the woods by the hounds of Sir John de Burgh, the younger, appeared before the city, making for the woods on the other side. Several youthful inhabitants gave chase, and their shouting was such that the animal, utterly disconcerted, leapt the city wall and broke her neck. The bailiff and beadles promptly handed the offenders —young Jews and Christians—to the forest officers, who found them guilty of offence against the king's deer, for which they were imprisoned and fined. A spirit of goodwill happily existed between the youthful would-be Nimrods, and Jew and Christian went surety for each other.

The scribe who recorded these events, anticipating the illustration of stories in black and white, sketched upon the margin of the roll a representation of a son of Abraham. He drew pronounced Jewish features, and adorned the clothing with the patch of cloth which all Jews, male and female, over the age of seven, were required by statute of

Edward the First to wear upon their gabardines. With utter disrespect, however, for the children of Israel, the artist inscribed beneath his creation the title, "Aaron fil Diaboli."

The bounds of the royal forest round Colchester having been determined, the perambulating knights turned their attention to the remainder of the county, and gave no better reason for their proposed disafforestings other than it "*ought* wholly to be beyond the forest according to the tenor of the Great Charter of the Forest," a phrase which appears to contain a reservation that certain tracts would not be so treated, and they conclude, not by pleading any disability to cope with the task set them, as did the knights of the previous century, but by a plain reminder that if the king had any other clear proofs he should have produced them.

The sweeping deductions of the Perambulatio Forestæ, which the king received in 1301, made for him extremely unpleasant reading, and he protested, as his father had done, against the curtailment of the forest area, and the consequent loss of a valuable revenue. An investigation was ordered and entrusted to other knights, who reported that in their opinion there was sufficient reason for retaining certain proposed disafforested tracts within the forest bounds. These portions which contained royal demesne, estates reverted to the

crown by escheat or otherwise, the examiners declared to be wrongfully disafforested. Their report appears to have led the king to hope that at least the triangular central portion of the county—formed by the two great roads, the Stratford to Colchester, and the Bishops Stortford to Colchester roads as sides, and the river Lea as base—would form his forest of Essex. The men of Essex, however, would make no such concession, in spite of much uncertainty as to the king's rights over many portions of the county (outside the bounds as laid down in 1301), and matters remained thus until the reign of Charles the First.

The district round Chelmsford at the present day contains much unspoiled country. Grassy commons, heathery heights, and wooded valleys, recall the once great forest of Essex. There was "no road through Chelmsford until some time after the Conquest," writes Gibson, "and even then it was not much frequented by reason it was exceedingly woody." The villages within a few miles from Chelmsford retain in their names forestal memories. The three Walthams, Great, Little, and Bury, like their famous namesake, indicate the homes in the wood. The three Woodhams, Walter, Mortimer, and Ferris, do the same. Woodham Walter, seven miles from Chelmsford, has an old barn, the remnant of the hawks mews once in charge of the Lord High Falconer of England.

Hazeleigh and Purley denote the hazel and pear fields, though Norden imagined the latter to have been so named from the purlieus of the forest. The three Hanningfields, South, West, and East, wear "even to-day a dreary forest-like appearance," complains some one. Stock, near by, indicates the place of felled timber. Galleywood and Highwood explain themselves. Broomfield, where the broom grew, and several Greens, recall places for pasture; while the Hatches perpetuate the entrance gates to the forest. Doddinghurst, ten miles from Chelmsford, and but just without the bounds in 1301, is the only place in the whole forestal county which has the Saxon "hurst" to denote its wooded condition.

John Norden noted in his *Survey* that the shire of Essex was "not anie wher altogether destitute of woode." Its parks were many and beautiful, and the whole county "well planted with noblem and gent as not a few sufficient and able yeomen." The south-western district containing "the hundreds of Waltham, Ongar, Becontre, and much of the liberty of Havering, are for the moste part woode and wooddie groundes and foreste, as the moste parte of Essex in time paste hath bene."

During the eleven years that Charles' rule was absolute, he increased the royal exchequer by fines levied upon districts reafforested for the purpose.

Lord Strafford, in a letter to a friend, writes, "The Justice Seat in Essex has been kept this Easter-week, and all Essex has become forest." And so indeed it had, in spite of the strongest protest. The want of a definite and clear statement with regard to the forestal nature of the centre of the county was at last felt. Charles, and the judges who served him, were quick to take advantage of any past indecision, and the whole county, with the exception of the Tendring hundred, was again brought under forest laws, as in the days of Stephen.

The supreme forest court, known as the Justice Seat, held at Stratford-by-Bow, in the year 1635, was a memorable one for Essex. Sir Simond D'Ewes, in his records of royal oppression, after bewailing "the great and dreadful wound inflicted by the levy of ship money upon the subjects' liberty in general," comes to matters of local interest, and writes: "This present year, 1635, the county of Essex had in particular a most heavy and fatal blow; for the whole shire upon the matter, except the hundred of Tendring, which the inhabitants had enjoyed quietly for about the space of 400 years, free from forest laws, was found to be within the forest of Havering, otherwise called the forest of Essex. It was found to be so by a jury of verderers, rangers, and other forest officers, and that verdict afterwards adjudged to be good in law by Finch, Joanes, Treaver, and some other

judges, of which Crooke and Hutton were none. The crown and sceptre are free from this sad fate of that county, were that judgment right or wrong, upon the consciences of the jury and the judges it must rest, to be determined at the last dreadful day."

A graphic description of the court proceedings is furnished by the Earl of Warwick, who was present with other nobles, to represent the landholders of the shire. Referring to the violent and intimidating manner of Mr. Attorney—Sir John Finch—towards the jury, the earl remarks: "He toulde them he sawe the country was sullen, but he woulde proceed notwithstanding." Opening out the forest roll of Edward the First, he read therefrom the ancient boundaries of the royal forest, comprising the land lying between the river Thames and the Stanstrete, followed by the reading of a roll of Edward the Second, which confirmed the same, and "he woulde know how his Master had lost every inch of it." The perplexed and hesitating jury received the full force of his rising anger. He raged at and "threatened them, and swore he woulde have a verdict for the King ere he stirred a foot thence, with very high and threatening wordes of higher nature and most violent action." As a consequence, after a two hours' consultation, the jury returned a verdict in favour of the king.

Five years later, when Essex had been mulcted to

the extent of £300,000, the king proclaimed through the Lord Warden of the Forest, " that his Majesty,

Stocks, Whipping-post, and Lock-up, Roydon.

understanding that the Forest Laws are grievous to the subjects of this kingdom, his Majesty, out of

his grace and goodness to his people, is willing to lay down all the new bounds of his forests in this kingdom, and that they shall be reduced to the same condition as they were before the late Justice Seat held."

The matter was considered too vital to be entrusted to but twelve knights, as of old, and no less than forty gentlemen were chosen to map out the new and revised boundary. Their perambulation was modelled on the lines of the famous Plantagenet one, so far as the main body of the forest was concerned, with the exception that the liberty of Havering was omitted, and the boundary beyond Epping was drawn through Thornwood and Broadley Commons, to Roydon beyond Nazeing, some twenty miles from London.

There is to-day much open and common land in the neighbourhood of Roydon, a quiet village retaining its ancient stocks, its whipping-post, and wooden lock-up on a small green before the church. Jack's Hatch—where an old cottage stands at the junction of the Parndon, Nazeing, and Roydon parishes—perpetuates the site of the entrance gate to the breezy pastures of the Nazeing uplands, whose barren slopes overlook the fertile valley of the river Lea.

After the Civil Wars, the royal forests were all but doomed to extinction. Indeed, had the Long Parliament sat longer, Essex and the other forests

which delight England to-day would have been swept out of sight. Thereafter a spirit of retalia-

Old Cottage, Jack's Hatch.

tion set in, and a new era dawned for the royal forests. The perambulation of 1641 ensured free-

dom from future regal encroachments, but did not prevent the "king's waste soil" from being appropriated by the commoners. The practice of illegal enclosure had been steadily growing since the dissolution of monasteries. "Divers greedy persons," proclaimed the young Edward the Sixth, "under colour and pretence of sowing of some little parcel" of the forest land with corn, had "for their private gain and profit so enclosed the said closes and pastures with unreasonable hedges and ditches" as to defraud the deer of their food, contrary to the law which allowed the forest pastures to be sown with corn, provided the deer had free access to the cultivated land. The complaint aimed at the nature of the enclosures—the high hedges and deep ditches—rather than the enclosures themselves, but as time went on the practice of farming forest land became a fruitful source of illegal encroachment.

A forest, which at the close of the Stuart dynasty stood at 60,000 acres, dwindled by gradual enclosure, legal as well as illegal, during the following century to one-fifth of its original size.

The inhabitants of the forest vills made encroachments upon the forest of the Georges in the most open and shameless manner, their conduct giving birth to the witticism that, "without ceasing to be villeins they grew into being poachers."

In the Hanault division of the forest, covering

17,000 acres of undulating country, east of the river Roding, the robbery of crown lands by the villagers is pleasantly chronicled by Sir W. Besant. "In order to make the clarity of conscience easier and safer," he writes, "they took the eighth commandment out of the Decalogue, and very soon forgot that it had ever existed; except when a new curate came and noticed its omission, and fumbled about and turned red. Then one of the churchwardens would go and explain to him briefly, that in the spiritual interests of the parish this incision has been found necessary. Because they gave up their whole leisure time to carving bits out of the forest, and adding them to their own gardens, sticking up palings around these bits; here a cantle and there a snippet; here a slab and there a slice; a round corner and a square corner; a bare piece of turf or a wooded chump; and all so neighbourly, encouraging each other the while, with a 'Brother, will this be to your mind?' or 'Help yourself, neighbour!' and 'Let me recommend, sir, another slice!' or 'A piece of the woody part, dear friend!'"

In 1709 the men of Romford boldly re-set the stone which marked the boundary of the forest at Colliers Row, thereby gaining at one stroke sixty acres for common land. It must not be supposed, however, that the gradual loss of the woodlands round Ilford, Barking, and Romford, was entirely the work of land-grabbers. Many outlying woods

and coppices were stubbed up by order of the forest officials, for the reason that his Majesty's deer seldom entered them; and because, from their nearness to the capital, they had become the haunts of vagabonds and poachers.

The stubbing up of Hawkswell Grove in Hainault Forest in 1737 is of interest from the fact that Thomas Graves, a scrivener of London, who had his country house at Barking Park, desired the removal of the wood, because it entirely spoiled the view from his house, and was of no value as forest, being far removed from the main woodland, and therefore unfrequented by the deer.

In 1851, Parliament disafforested the woods of Hainault. The Commissioners of Woods and Forests had recommended this course, viewing, in the sale of the timber, and the cultivation of the lands, not desecration, but revenue. With the exception of a fragment here and there, the woodland was accordingly felled; roots were stubbed up by the use of steam ploughs, and the countryside, bereft of its green glades and leafy bowers, showed brown with newly furrowed soil.

The result was a great shock to all lovers of the old forest; a shock also to the energetic cribbers. Of the commissioners' action Besant writes: "They converted miles of wild forest, with rough uplands and green dales covered with grand old trees, into a treeless tract, staked out in squared fields and

rectangular roads. Then they wagged their stupid heads, and rubbed together their ridiculous hands, and said it was a great improvement."

After the destruction of the Hainault section of Waltham Forest, spoliation and encroachment were carried on apace for the next twenty years in the remaining division, known now as Epping Forest. Of the 43,000 acres over which the crown had forestal rights, according to the perambulation of 1641, but 6000 acres remained when Hainault Forest disappeared. The above-mentioned commissioners, not having here the soil at their disposal, offered to the lords of the various forest manors the purchase of the crown's rights at the rate of five pounds to the acre, and stated—wrongly enough, as was proved afterwards—that the purchaser had powers of enclosure; while the fear that others might acquire the right to enclose practically compelled the manorial lords to the purchase.

Unhappily the Lord Warden of the Forest, the Hon. Wellesley-Pole, afterwards Earl of Mornington, who was also lord of four forest manors, had set a baneful example to his fellow lords by shamelessly abusing his office, and appropriating large portions of forest land within his manors. His own solicitor he appointed Steward of the Forest Courts to assist him in infringing the forest laws instead of enforcing them. To what extent the steward succeeded can be judged from his own

admission in 1831. "If any of the under keepers at Wanstead made a presentment of an enclosure at the Court of Attachments, I should have laughed at him, and kicked him out of the court, and stuck by my manor."

With the chief officers of the forest to lead the way to its destruction, 3000 acres were soon enclosed, and what was worse, partly built upon. Forest land worth three hundred pounds per acre was, when divided into building plots, increased in value to one thousand pounds, and "desirable residences" on forest land were seized by Londoners with avidity. Roads and railways were cut through the heart of the grand old forest, and the danger of its total extinction was imminent, when at the eleventh hour a mighty champion arose to do battle on its behalf. That champion was the corporation of the City of London who, with its vast resources, continued the unequal struggle so long manfully maintained, first by "The Commons Preservation Society," and later by the "Forest Fund Committee."

A volume might be written of this unique struggle against odds. The government of the day had sided with the land-grabbers; indeed a bill was introduced into parliament which would have granted the manorial lords the whole forest, with the exception of a thousand acres, which relatively small portion was intended to satisfy the claims of the commoners.

An appeal to the crown resulted in a Royal Commission inquiry, so that, by the time the city corporation entered the battle-field, the issue was exciting the keenest interest. The legal war which ensued lasted for three years, the final hearing engaged eighteen counsel for three weeks. On November 24, 1874, Sir George Jessel, Master of the Rolls, in his clear, concise, and masterly judgment, did not use the word "robbery" in connection with the doings of the seventeen defendants, but he said: "They have taken other persons' property, without their consent, and have appropriated it to their own use." Judgment was accordingly entered for the corporation, who won their hard-fought victory over the combined array of the manorial lords at the enormous cost of £25,000.

During the four years which separate the defeat of the forest lords from the disafforesting of Epping Forest by Act of Parliament, numerous spirited skirmishes took place between the commoners and the "grantees," the purchasers of illegally enclosed land. Their fences were overthrown, then re-erected to be again cast down, and often destroyed.

The Epping Forest Act of 1878 restored to the public the 6000 acres of the forest, excepting only those portions which, as curtilage to dwellings, the owners retained by such payments as were determined by the arbitrator, Lord Hobhouse, for the quieting of their titles. The difficult and intricate

task allotted Lord Hobhouse took four years; but finally, in 1872, the bounds of the forest were defined; the lords of the manors, and about five hundred possessors of illegally enclosed land, were compensated for their purchase; and the forest as an open space for the recreation and enjoyment of

Ye Olde Thatched House Hotel, Epping.

the public was secured by the outlay of about £250,000.

The gradual curtailment of the woodlands of a county to those existing near a small market town is eloquently expressed in the change of the name of the forest. "The chase of vast extent" which Camden wrote of as being "called hertofore, by way of eminence, the Forest of Essex, now Waltham

Forest from the town of Waltham—that is, a dwelling in the woods,"—is now simply called Epping Forest, from the ancient market village of that name, at its north-eastern extremity.

Epping, by no means the most important manor, gave its name to the present forest from being next to Waltham, the most important place within the forest bounds. It acquired a reputation in the old coaching days, as a convenient halt for travellers on the Cambridge road to or from London, as also for its market.

> "Epping for butter justly famed
> And pork in sausage pop't,"

sings Hood of the market produce for which the good town had once both name and fame. But the market of Epping is now but the ghost of its old self. Its coaching days are o'er, and the ancient inns in its long broad street struggle against lethargy by catering for the wants of hundreds of London cyclists who make the place their rendezvous.

CHAPTER V

THE FAMOUS "EASTER CHASE" OF THE LONDON CITIZENS

'Midst those trees the wild deer bounded
Ages long ere we were born.
And our great-grandfathers sounded
Many a jovial hunting-horn.

HUNTING, it has been claimed, is an antidote for all the evils of mind and body. Walter de Langley, who wrote in 1327, was convinced that the joy of the hunter's heart sprang from a just appreciation of Dame Nature, in conjunction with a devotion to the Goddess Diana, and concluded therefrom that "hunters go into Paradise when they die, and live in the world most joyfully of any men."

Fitz-Stephen, in a flattering notice of London and its citizens, written about the year 1174, mentions "the great delight in fowling with merlins, hawks, etc., as likewise in hunting," which animated the Londoners of his day. It is a far cry from Fitz-Stephen of the twelfth to Stow of the seventeenth century, yet "in hawking and hunting," writes the latter, "many grave citizens at this present have great delight, and do rather want leisure than good-will to follow it."

The wished-for opportunity to indulge in sport was provided by the Easter holiday, when municipal cares were laid aside, and the open life of the woods enjoyed to the full.

There is evidence, however, before the days of Stow, that want of leisure meant a lack of attention to the niceties of sporting etiquette. As business claimed them more and more, the worthy citizens of London made but an indifferent spectacle in the hunting-field.

In the stately days of Queen Elizabeth, the Easter meeting of the city fathers provoked great ridicule at court by reason of its violent contrast with the extravagant splendour of the queen's hunting retinue. The fine sensibilities of the court being offended, Cecil, Lord Burghley, approached the Lord Mayor and commonalty with an offer to present to the city three bucks annually in place of their Easter hunt. The proposal was scornfully

rejected. Ridiculed or otherwise, the city did not intend to lose that glorious day in the woods. So on through the Stuart and the Hanoverian dynasties, London held to its ancient privilege, and an Easter hunt continued to flourish.

At this point, the history of the Easter chase becomes somewhat involved. The "Epping hunt" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is supposed to have been the continuance of the old-time "huntings" sanctioned by royal charter. That it was the survival of the ancient Easter meeting of the citizens cannot be denied, but the idea that the Epping hunt was held according to chartered right is entirely erroneous.

The corporation of the City of London have no royal charter to support the oft repeated and emphatic assertion that the citizens of London held the right to hunt over the king's waste soil in the forest of Essex. As has already been shown, the Lord Mayor and Court of Common Council hunted in what is now called Epping Forest, by special favour of the ruling monarch, by a royal invitation, **not by chartered right.**

A story, which is more picturesque than accurate, credits the founding of Epping hunt to Richard the First. It represents the king expectant of a large loan of money from a rich Jew who, mindful of the brutal treatment meted out to men of his race by the apprentices of London at Easter time,

"*insisted* that the custom must be abolished before he would enter into negotiations for a loan." Richard, with an eye to the shekels, agreed to his request. Whereupon the citizens represented to his Majesty that their apprentices had been accustomed on Easter Monday to hunt the Jews through the streets, and saw nothing amiss, that some were knocked on the head when finally run down. "I would not," quoth Richard, "that the brave boys of London should remember Cœur-de-Lion as a spoil-sport." In place of their Jew hunting in narrow streets and alleys, and in order that they might "be cunning of woodcraft, we of our royal bounty," continued Richard, "grant them our goodly forest of Epping as a hunting-ground, yea, and yearly a stag of ten for their chase that shall try their speed better than ever yet did dog Jew, though he too ran for his life."

The statement which declares that the Easter hunt in Essex "commenced in the year 1226," by favour of Henry the Third, has more to recommend it, but cannot at present be substantiated. Henry the Third, in his charters to the citizens of London, confirmed to them their ancient rights of hunting; but no mention is made of "free warren in the forest of Hainault" as claimed. It is possible, since Hainault was the king's own soil, that Henry granted the London citizens the right to hold an Easter hunt in that part of the Essex Forest—a grant

not recorded in any charter, and which Henry's successors therefore saw no occasion to confirm.

It is strange that John Strype, the historian, makes no mention of the citizens' Easter hunt in Essex. Strype, who lived from the reign of Charles the Second to that of George the Second at Low Leyton within the forest—dying at the ripe age of ninety-four—had special facilities for noting this Easter gathering, if such were held. He has recorded that "riding on horseback, and hunting with my Lord Mayor's hounds when the Common Hunt (*i.e.*, Mr. Common Hunt, the city's huntsman) goes out" was a favourite pastime of the London citizens, but is silent as to Easter time.

So gradual was the blending of the ancient Easter hunt which was held over the recognised hunting-grounds of the citizens in Middlesex and Hertford, with the meeting that became so notorious in Epping Forest, that the corporation themselves failed to recognise how the connection had arisen. They firmly believed that their presence in Essex was in accordance with ancient privilege, and had actually betrayed themselves into claiming their supposed right, before they discovered that their claim could not be substantiated by charter.

It would appear that when the citizens' hunting-grounds round London became by degrees enclosed parks, or pastures, when woods were stubbed up, and heathery wastes and commons were con-

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verted into cultivated land, the wild deer and beasts of the chase were driven further and further from the confines of the city, and found a sanctuary in the woodlands beyond the Lea.

Good Queen Anne delighted to encourage the attendance of the gentlemen of London at the Easter meet of the royal buckhounds, and meetings near London, either towards Windsor or Epping Forests, were arranged for the Londoners' special benefit. Anne's Georgian successors, especially the queen of George the Second, chose the same means of winning the affections of the city merchants, and royalty fraternised with the field and took great pleasure in their subjects' enjoyment. Wherever the royal pack met, the general public were welcome to join in the chase, and though the city still retained its own hounds—the deep-mouthed hounds kennelled in the Finsbury Fields—the habit of following the royal buckhounds at Easter-time lured the citizens from their allegiance to ancient custom. The honour of joining royalty induced also the Lord Mayor to forego the pleasure of hunting with the city pack, and he, with hundreds of Londoners, rode out to the Easter hunt of the royal hounds. The traditional belief in London's rights, therefore, owes its birth to that association of people, time, and place, which combined royalty, the Lord Mayor, London's citizens, Epping Forest, and an Easter Monday.

Sir Francis Child, Lord Mayor in the days of the second George, preferred to hunt with the city hounds, and did, except on those occasions when the royal buckhounds met in Epping Forest. Sir Francis—who lived at Brentwood in Essex, twenty miles from London—succeeded Humphrey Parsons in the mayoralty, and, like that notorious sportsman, was renowned in the hunting-field. He had indeed held the office of "Common Hunt," the Master of the City Hounds, and knew how to provide good sport. The recognised qualities of Child and Parsons redeems the memory of London's Lord Mayors from the reproach of ignorance of sporting matters which formed the basis of the witticisms made at mayorial expense in more degenerate days.

Coursing rather than hunting is the favourite theme for such attacks wherein the doings of my Lord Mayor are specially criticised, as when are not the actions of those who sit in high places and wear purple. D'Urfey, in his *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, dispenses merriment compounded of the ludicrous side of the civic gatherings at Easter. Of the mayor he writes:—

My Lord, he takes a staff in hand to beat the bushes o'er,
I must confess it was a work he ne'er had done before.
A creature pounceth from a bush which made them all to laugh,
My Lord, he cried "A hare! a hare!" but it proved an Essex calf.

A fanciful exaggeration of the powers of the timid

hare, described centuries ago by that good old huntsman, Twici, as "the most marvellous beast upon earth," is the dominant note of these witticisms. The culminating point is reached in the story of a holder of the city mace and sword, evidently mistaking the cry: "A hare! a hare!" to herald the approach of some forest monster. With set lips and knitted brow his gallant lordship advanced with drawn sword to meet the oncoming of the supposed enemy. With a flourish of his weapon he bravely cried: "Let him come! Let him come! I thank my God I fear him not."

It would be difficult to determine the date of the last hunt attended by the Lord Mayor and aldermen in the Essex Woods; but it is safe to conjecture that when the office of "Common Hunt" was abolished in 1807, no more official hunts were held. Moreover, the mayorial custom of attending the Spital Service at church on an Easter Monday morning, together with the banquet given in the afternoon, and the grand ball in the evening, entirely precluded the possibility of joining the Epping hunt, whatever opportunities the mayor found of indulging in sport during the remainder of Easter Week. Indeed the Easter chase in Epping Forest, when shorn of its royal patronage, and its prestige as a civic gathering lost to it, was for some time known as the "Ladies' hunt." The name arose from the circumstance that Earl Tylney of

Wanstead, the Lord Warden of the Forest, and lord of several forest manors, invited a company of the fair sex to his beautiful forest mansion, when a hunt was arranged in the forest, and a dinner followed by a ball, brought an enjoyable day to a close.

The ladies on these occasions attracted great attention, and they and their mounts won the admiration of a crowd who were quick to notice the contrast afforded by the graceful and dexterous control of their steeds, when many a city Nimrod failed to keep the saddle. The large attendance was chiefly responsible for the damage which a few of the fair ones sustained, though by far the greater number of ladies were in at the death.

A story is told of a master tailor of Garlick Hill who, having an order to measure a gentleman of Chigwell Row for a suit of sables, determined to visit his customer on the Easter Monday, and combine business with the pleasures of the chase. He hired a horse, gave securities for its safe return, and rode forth into the forest. Falling in with the hunt he gaily pursued the stag for three miles, when suddenly his plans for the day were rudely shattered. His horse fouled a fence, and threw him into a cabbage garden, and by the time he had separated himself from the greens, the animal had disappeared and was not heard of again.

The notoriety of the Epping hunt once provoked

the curiosity of Lord Brougham—the Chancellor in 1830. He had evidently expected to see the mayor and aldermen there, but failing to observe any civic robes among the throng, he asked a man standing near if he could help him to distinguish the Mayor of London, adding, "I will give you a crown, can you point out the Lord Mayor?" "No!" said the man, "but for half-a-crown I will point out Lord Brougham." His lordship, who had no wish to be recognised, was so taken aback that he immediately left the forest.

In 1858, Lord Brougham went openly to view the Epping hunt in the company of some of the aldermen of the city, who, however, at that late date, could not have been present in any official capacity. The head of the stag that was hunted on that occasion was afterwards presented to the corporation of London by Colonel Palmer, the oldest of the verderers of the forest at that time. It was placed in the Guildhall on a tablet which bears an explanatory inscription. The animal was a stag of six years, for its horns have all their "rights" and "two on top," the technical terms for its antlers and the points at the top of the horn. It had probably been kept in a paddock, since the wild red deer of Epping Forest had by 1858 long ago been transferred to Windsor Forest, or had been captured or killed.

A century ago, a notice—such as that in *The*

Times of March 27, 1807—proclaimed the continuance of the ancient custom thus:

"Epping Forest—Stag Hunting.

"The Public are informed that there will be a Deer turned out, at the usual place on Easter Monday next, March the 30th, by the Authority of the Ranger of the Forest."

The effect of this advertisement was that a curiously mixed assemblage of would-be hunters, accompanied by the ladies of their households, left the metropolis in every conceivable kind of conveyance. Coach and chaise, whisky and cart, gig and waggon, jostled hunter and hack, horse and ass along the ten miles of road which led to Buckhurst Hill or other meeting-place.

The *Sporting Review* describes the animals as "of every height, colour, breed, age, action, and pedigree. There were high mettled and low mettled, topping horses and horses of bottom; easy goers, hard goers, and no goers, kickers and bolters, dancers and prancers, old soldiers and young chargers, leapers and creepers; long-tailed, bob-tailed, rat-tailed, and some with tails that never were seen before. Careful horses keeping their eyes fixed on the ground to pick their steps; clean-going nags kicking the stones out of their way as they went along. Horses musical, roarers, grunters

and whinniers; ewe-necked hacks, tired hunters and hired hunters, knackers late in going to the dogs; blood horses and bony horses, blind, lame, and lazy prads, horses with broken knees—or, as the riders declared—with merely a bit of a graze, the only graze they appeared to have had for many a day."

The riders do not receive as searching an analysis as their steeds, but are described as " red coats and green coats, blue coats and black coats, sporting sweeps with no coats at all. Baronets, butchers, dandies, huntsmen, dustmen, knife-grinders, tinkers, tailors, nobocracy, snobocracy."

This ill-assorted crowd made their way to Epping Forest, and to that particular part of it lying between Buckhurst Hill and High Beech known as Fairmead Bottom, swelling an ever-increasing assemblage of horses and conveyances, riders and pedestrians, dogs and donkeys. Booths and stalls, piemen and vendors of various comestibles, drove a thriving trade, the while a huge multitude of many thousands, impatiently awaited the arrival of the deer and hounds.

About mid-day or soon after, the stag, previously stabled at the " Bald-Faced Stag," or the " Horse and Groom," was driven to the " meet," in a deer van amidst much excitement and noisy acclamation. Huntsmen and hounds with difficulty reached their appointed place, while the pollard

oaks and beeches swarmed with men and boys eager to view the release of the stag. The huntsman's attire consisted of "a huge antique red frock-coat, with a grass green collar, mother-o'-pearl buttons, as big as crown pieces, yellow and black striped waistcoat, pair of dark greasy corduroy inexpressibles and mahogany tops." The whipper-in claimed attention with "a green cut-away, a pair of ochre-coloured balloon-like leather breeches—evidently made for a stouter man—a black velvet cap, some rusty couples," and a horse, described by one writer as "a fac-simile of Petruchio's."

The hounds—at one time deserving of all praise—are usually undescribed in the press notices of the hunt, and therefore unridiculed. They were in their prime, a draft of Colonel Mellish's hounds—the Colonel Mellish killed by the highwaymen—which in 1806 were sold to the Devon and Somerset packs. As time went on, the difficulty of maintaining a pack increased, and hounds for the Easter chase were drafted from many different kennels, and when collected presented an ill-matched assortment of fox-hounds and harriers, of which few were accustomed to hunt together.

Taken as a whole, then, Fairmead Bottom must have presented a sufficiently startling *ensemble* calculated to urge the deer to its best speed, but for the fact that the same animal was hunted on

several occasions, and one year, shout as the onlookers might, the deer refused to improve upon a trot. The animal in question was a one-eared hind, and when liberated, "instead of taking the usual route to the left, she turned suddenly to the right, a circumstance quite inexcusable, inasmuch as she had been repeatedly hunted before and ought to have known better." For some reason, quite unaccounted for, the hounds, who "objected to have their toes trodden upon," entirely missed their one-eared quarry, and she was left behind to dodge pedestrian hunters among the bushes, till tired of playing hide-and-seek she cantered back to Woodford and ended this farcical hunt by hiding in a pond, from which she was dragged and stabled for future use; for though the forest authorities allowed the Easter chase to take place over the waste soil of Epping Forest, and permitted an animal or two to be captured and reserved for the purpose, the wild deer of the forest were not made the object of the day's sport. The carted stag naturally became very tame, and, when released, frequently made straight for his paddock at Woodford. The advantage to the sightseers was immense; for the animal, on being turned, sometimes kept to the woods lying between Woodford and High Beech for the space of two or three hours, delighting the crowds who were thus enabled to keep him in view. This was not generally the case, for he was invari-

ably soon lost among the thickets and recovered afterwards, his gay ribbons and chaplet of flowers betraying his hiding-place.

On one occasion, "the simple buck, not seemingly disposed to leave his snug box, was rather unceremoniously lugged out by the leg, and fell at full length before an ambuscade of enemies, on whom he turned and gazed in terror." The natural swiftness of the stag, augmented by wings of abject terror, caused the animal to bound out of sight so quickly that a great many spectators failed to catch even a glimpse of him, a very poignant disappointment to hundreds. "Woeful was Whitechapel, melancholy the men of Mile End, sorrow sighed in Shoreditch, and Gracechurch Street groaned in grief." The hunt to all intents and purposes for most people was over ere it had begun; but to those blessed with firm seats in the saddle a run of twenty miles was often obtained, punctuated by the frequent squabbles with the turnpike men of the forest district.

In the year 1821 an item in the programme at the Saddler's Wells Theatre was a comic extravaganza, representing the ludicrous adventures of a tallow-chandler in the forest at Easter-time. It was billed "The Epping Hunt," "written as a satire upon such heroes of the Cockney breed as are annually seized with an ambition of exhibiting at the Epping Hunt on Easter Monday those hacked

Bucephaluses which on other occasions they are content to exhibit in Rotten Row."

Of the citizens' arrival in town D'Urfey writes:—

"And when they had done their sport,
They came to London where they dwell.
Their faces all so torn and scratched
Their wives scarce knew them well.
For 'twas a mercy great so many 'scaped alive,
For of twenty saddles carried out
They brought again but five."

As proof of their attendance at the Epping Hunt, "the booted Jack-a-dandies," says the *Morning Herald* of April 18, 1786, "brought home bits of skin in their pockets and talked at the porter house of the excellence of the sport, and the immense hard riding—from one public house to another." The desire to obtain some trophy of the chase became so acute that, on one occasion, the dwellers east of Aldgate pump plucked the deer when stabled nearly bare.

Such was the Epping Hunt of bygone days. Thousands and ten thousands of London's inhabitants assembled in Epping Forest to enjoy for one brief day privileges such as their citizen forefathers had exercised round London for countless generations. The old-time "huntings," sanctioned by Henry the First and confirmed by his successors, had degenerated into a meeting in which the crown had no interest. A charitable view must be taken

of its failings—the holiday humour of its devotees—the poor appointments of its hunting suite—the ribbons streaming from the horns of the deer—the gala attire of the field. London enjoyed its Easter Hunt, and if its Epping Forest, its own recreation ground for ever, now fails to provide a *fête* as of yore, its visitors on an Easter Monday are distinctly jubilant.

The Times of Easter Tuesday, 1841, strikes the right note when, in a report of the Monday's proceedings, it adds: "Thus ended the Easter Hunt of this year without any serious accident as far as we could ascertain, and thus terminated a meeting much more agreeable than some assemblies of far higher pretensions, where plans are projected for hunting down hinds of greater service to society than the deer of the forest, and chasers are laid on for taking still more lively bucks, in order that they may again be let go, and then let go to be taken again, though sometimes, and especially if adorned with ribands, they get off scot free."

Thomas Hood, in his *Whims and Oddities*, written at Lake House near Wanstead Park, describes one of these "Epping Hunts" in his own inimitable style. "The Easter Chase," he writes, "will soon be numbered with the pastimes of past times. Its dogs will have had their day, and its deer will be fallow." On account, therefore, of "this melancholy decadence" he records the doings of a certain

Cheapside merchant, John Huggins, who, emulating the equestrian performances of another John, one Gilpin, decided to leave his business in Cheap and hunt the Epping deer.

He accordingly awoke on Easter Monday in a proper hunting frame of mind, sang "This day a stag must die," the while he attired himself in "yellow buckskins fitted close as once upon a stag," and having mounted "a goodly gray"—the joint property of his neighbour Fig and himself—rode forth by way of Tottenham, across the river Lea to Woodford, and thence into Fairmead Bottom. Here the worthy Huggins encountered a series of minor disasters. From the rest of the field he was early "branched off" and unhorsed. He regained the saddle, and attracted by the mighty shout of exultation which notified the release of "Robin, a noted forest buck," observed that animal, "bedecked in ribbons fine," heading straight for him, "charging in his rear." The effect upon John is not recorded, but his horse promptly bolted, and Huggins was taken "at mercy of his steed" to the very forefront of the chase, among the hounds. The two huntsmen, Tom and Bob Rounding, anxiously cautioned him against riding down the hounds and shouted, "Hold hard!" which innocent John, interpreting literally, answered:—

"I've got the saddle well in hand
And hold as hard as you."

Meantime, the rest of the field were in an excited state of mind and body. With Robin's release the rush after him—Niagara-like in its intensity—resulted in a *melée*. Stirrups, whips and caps were lost, while beaver hats "fell in showers," accompanied in a score of cases by their wearers, who fell "into the purling brook to enjoy their early 'purl,'" while "speeches from the thrown" were heard on all sides. Deer and dogs vanished in a trice. "The stag had led a hart and lo! the whole pack followed suit," and flew "to hills we know not of," or "nunlike took the vale."

The company of horsemen grew less and less as "each thicket served to thin it," but Huggins held bravely on, though greatly "bumped and galled—yet not where Gall for bumps did ever look"—a delicately-veiled innuendo, that John's bumps were at the farther end of the vertebral column to that studied by the famous phrenological professor. Finally, John was bumped off into a furze bush where, in addition to the legal nine points, he became possessed of ninety more.

He painfully emerged to view his horse appropriated by "a jolly wight," who left behind his own "sorry nag," which John mounted, bent upon pursuit. His cup of misfortune was, however, not yet filled. He was thrown at the first gate, while farmer, goodly gray, huntsmen, and hounds quickly vanished from sight and hearing.

Nothing remained but to return to Woodford, so John, "full of ills, of course betook him to the Wells," where jolly old Rounding, the one-time huntsman, now landlord of "The Horse and Groom," endeavoured by hearty laughter and good liquor to infuse fresh spirit into the dejected Huggins. Fortunately Fate was kind. He heard tell of a goodly gray, and having paid the man "a bottle and a pound," not without "remorse for riding his own horse," returned to London convinced of his folly "in leaving Cheap to go and hunt the deer."

The Roundings were all capital sportsmen. The veteran "Tommy" had been chief huntsman to the profligate Long-Pole-Wellesley of Wanstead, the Lord Warden of the forest. When the pack of hounds maintained by that spendthrift nobleman were disposed of, Tommy Rounding retained his favourites and continued to hunt with them until 1822. The hounds were the best of their kind, the real old-fashioned staghounds, tawny and white giants, docile under management; excellent in the chase; keeping their hold on the line of the hunted red deer, "all through fallow deer and take no notice," as Rounding said of them to a contributor to *Baily's Magazine of Sports*. "I could soon tell if we were right when a hound challenged," he continued. "We had very good runs all over Essex, and went a good pace when the scent was

good." When Rounding could no longer maintain the pack intact, they were dispersed among the keepers and gentry of the neighbourhood. "Gamester," the last to survive, belonged to General Grosvenor of Reindeer Lodge, and closed his record by hunting down a sheep-stealer.

Rounding was a familiar figure to thousands of Londoners at an Easter Chase, when, as the *Illustrated News* said of him: "He was to be seen in all his glory as Master Ordinary and Extraordinary of the day." That the Epping Hunt degenerated into a farce was not the fault of men like Rounding, and past generations of Londoners had much cause to revere his memory.

"Tommy" has been immortalised in verse by Thomas Hood, who wrote with the certainty of friendship and close acquaintance the following description of the old huntsman:—

> "A snow-white head, a merry eye,
> A cheek of jolly blush;
> A claret tint laid on by health
> With Master Reynard's brush.
>
> A hearty frame, a courteous bow,
> The prince he learned it from;
> His age about three-score-and-ten
> And there you have Old Tom."

In the early part of the nineteenth century but one old stag of the wild red deer remained to Epping Forest. A hunt was arranged by Rounding and

largely attended. The stag was roused from his lair, and hunted according to the old style known as hunting "at force." He broke from the cover of the forest, led into the open country towards Hainault, and gave a final and exciting chase. After a good run he was killed at West Ham, and the chase of the wild red deer in Epping Forest was over for ever.

The fallow deer remained, and were hunted for years afterwards, though the Easter Chase of the Londoners scarcely affected them, for the days of the carted stag had arrived, and it became apparent that the "Hunt" was little more than a "Meet." The would-be huntsman, during his ride from the city, invariably discovered that he and his hired hack were of different opinion. Therefore it was with pleasurable relief that he resigned an all-too-insecure seat in the saddle for a firm and comfortable chair at the well-spread tables of the local inns. The "Castle Inn" at Woodford, the "Horse and Groom" at Woodford Wells, the "Bald-Faced Stag" and "Roebuck" of Buckhurst Hill, the "Robin Hood" and "King's Oak" at High Beech, among others, were noted for the good cheer provided on these occasions. At Rounding's house, "The Horse and Groom,"—the "Horse and Wells" now occupies the site—it was customary to hand round the festive board a large and handsome silver cup upon which was engraved "From Long

Wellesley abroad to Tommy Rounding at home," a present from the exiled prodigal to his late huntsman.

Rounding died in the January of 1841, and was buried in Woodford. He was succeeded by his brother William, and the two sons, Tom and Bob, of Hood's verse. The "Hunt" thereafter rapidly declined. A Rounding was still huntsman, but the spirit of the old time Easter Chase had fled. There followed only a few men in pink, well-mounted enthusiasts; until in the early sixties but one "pink" put in an appearance, and in keeping with the woe-begone condition of the field, the deer was feeble with age.

The "death" of the ancient custom had been sounded. Those who came from London thereafter came in vain. Their waiting was unrewarded. There was no Rounding, no hounds, no deer. The Easter Monday Hunt of the London citizens was numbered with the things of the past.

CHAPTER VI

THE NOBLES WHO WERE FOREST OFFICIALS

Iche Edoard Kinge
Have yoven of my foreste ye keepinge
Of the Hundredth of Chelmer and Dawncing
To Randolphe Peperking and his kinling:
With hart and hind, do and bokke
Hare and Fox, Catt and Brocke,
Wylde foule with his flock.
Partriche, feasant hen, and feasant cock;
With green and wylde stob and stock.
To kepen and to yeoman by all their might
Both by daie and eke by night,
And hounds for to hould, good swift and boulde
Four greyhounds and vj raches
For hare and fox and wild cattes:
And therefore I make him my booke.
Witness the Bysshop Wolfston
And book y learned many a one.

And Swayne of Essex our Brother
And liken to him many other
And our Stuard Howelyn
That besought mee for him.

THE above curious rhyme purports to be a charter drawn up by Edward the Confessor, in which Ralph Pevorel surnamed Peperking, is appointed keeper of the forest in the two hundreds of Chelmsford and Dengie in Essex. The document from which it is taken, though not the original charter, yet claims to be a genuine copy of it. Written in its present form in Tudor times, it is styled: "A Coppie made of a graunt by King Edward called the Confessor, before the Conquest and remayn of record in the Exchequer."

When William the Conqueror—faithful to the promises given in Normandy — rewarded his followers with the lands of the dispossessed Saxons, Essex was among the earliest of the counties to be distributed, and fell to William's relatives and favourites. Randolphe Peverelli or Pevorel of the Doomsday Book, with Suene of Essex—two of the persons mentioned in the rhyming charter were among the few Essex landlords who were not despoiled of their land at the Conquest. The reason is not far to seek, for they were both Norman, or Norman Danes, resident in the county in the days of the Confessor, and were of some assistance to William.

With very few exceptions Essex became wholly Norman. Saxon names gave place to longer and more fantastic French ones. Among such were Hugh-with-the-Beard, and Roger-God-save-our-ladies. The first descriptive name is readily understood, for the Normans usually shaved their chins, but the other extraordinary appellation is capable of much interesting conjecture.

The borough of Colchester remained for the greater part ungranted, for William's sagacity in political affairs bade him halt before interfering with so ancient and important a borough, and Saxon, therefore, Colchester remained until it accepted the rule of a Norman benefactor.

Peverel is believed to have considerately relieved William of his Mistress Ingelrica, the daughter of a Saxon Thane, and to have been rewarded in consequence. Hatfield Peverel, not far from Chelmsford, is named after him; where in the church is a stone figure, said to represent Ingelrica, who founded a priory there in atonement for her past life.

There are so many points about this interesting old rhyming charter that are difficult of explanation, that many historians have thereby decided that the whole composition is a fabrication. The fact that its language is not of the eleventh century, but rather that of the fourteenth, is one of the arguments raised to prove its spurious character. Also

the grouping of the two hundreds for forest administration forms another serious objection to its authenticity, for the practice was not known till Plantagenet times; while the reference in it to Suene of Essex as "our brother" is the climax that brands the document as apocryphal.

Suene of Essex, mentioned in Doomsday Book as one of the largest landholders in all Essex, though a Norman Dane, allied to the royal blood, was most certainly not Sweyn, the Confessor's brother-in-law. The son of the famous Godwin, and brother to Editha the Fair, and King Harold, was the Earl of Wessex. Either the scribe failed to distinguish between the two, or else took a great liberty for the sake of his rhyme.

Mr. Fisher, in his valuable *Forest of Essex*, is of opinion that the descendants of Peverel forged the document in question in order to substantiate their claim to certain forestal privileges which would accrue to the hereditary office of a forest keeper, though he admits that in all probability they based their claim upon the fact that Peverel had actually held office in Chelmsford and Dengie. There exists no document to prove whether Peverel actually held office or continued as keeper under the new régime. Doomsday Book sheds no light upon the question of Essex as a royal forest, nor to whom was entrusted its management. Not until the reign of the first Plantagenet, Henry the Second, is

there distinct documentary evidence relating to the officers of the forest. Henry Plantagenet appointed Richard the son of Gilbert de Montfichet to the office of forester of the royal forest of Essex, but by the wording of the grant to him and his heirs it is certain that his predecessors had held the same office and had probably done so since the Conquest. De Montfichet, whose name became corrupted into Munfichet, was rewarded with land at Stansted, named Stansted Mountfitchet after him, a district some forty miles in circumference, where on the hill arose the Munfichet's baronial castle, of which some slight remains still exist.

Munfichet was succeeded by his son of the same name. The younger Richard was one of those doughty champions who fought for the liberties of the nation against King John. He was among the twenty-five whose names are affixed to that immortal document the *Magna Carta*, and received sentence of excommunication from the Pope in consequence. He was mentioned by an old chronicler in rather a quaint way. Writing of the troubles between King John and the King of France, he remarks that "there were only two knights and a half renowned in England for their valour. Robert FitzWalter, Robert FitzRoger — Richard Mount Fitchet was the half-knight." Richard was taken prisoner at the battle of Lincoln and deprived of his forestership, but paid a fine and

was restored. In the days of the young Henry the Third he became the most important official in Essex. He was sheriff as well as forester, which combined offices placed the administration of the whole county in his hands. In addition he was appointed castellan of the castle at Colchester, where he appropriated from the riding forester of the district one hundred hens and five hundred eggs, the hens valued at one penny each, and the eggs at threepence per hundred.

But though Munfichet with others had fought so nobly and strenuously against injustice, of which forestal oppression formed no small part, and had wrung from Henry the Third the Charter of Forests, they were yet at the mercy of the king's unscrupulous favourite, Robert Passlewe or Passlow. Passlewe saw clearly that a great number of persons were occupying land in and around the royal forests, and he proposed that a careful inquisition should be made, and all such persons "who presumed so to occupy" should be heavily fined. His scheme met with the warm approval of his royal master, who appointed Passlewe to carry it through.

Honest old Matthew Paris, who has chronicled these events, mentions that in the November preceding Passlewe's circuit there was thunder and lightning for "fifteen successive days." Such an unusual atmospheric disturbance, he decides, was "a sad presage of coming events," for Passlewe's

activity was very soon felt. "By cunningly devised and cavilling pretexts he despoiled of their property all who were subject to him." "Religious men and seculars," the "noble and ignoble" were all "mulcted in a heavy penalty." The result was dire distress. "Many became homeless and wanderers, and were compelled to beg; others were committed to prison or, being despoiled of all their property, prolonged a wretched existence in want and misery."

No one, however, felt the heavy hand of Passlewe so severely as did John de Nevill. He had succeeded his father, Hugh de Nevill in the office of High Forester, and by "following the track of his father step by step" had risen to a position of "considerable importance amongst the nobles of England;" in fact, according to Matthew Paris, he had "attained the summit of earthly honour." The ancient chronicler dwells upon his career for the reason that it affords a "plain example to the inhabitants of this world not to trust to the favour of kings, and to avoid the fluctuations of a court." For in the prime of his manhood and at the height of his success Nevill was visited by Robert Passlewe. Accusations of "many unlawful occupations of the forest" followed, and he was committed to prison. While in prison it was expected that he would be deprived of his barony, or forced to pay "an ignominious ransom," unless "the royal clemency

should on the powerful intercession of the other nobles, mitigate the severity of the sentence." But De Nevill had unfortunately been severe in his office. No one interceded on his behalf, and at his trial, being unable to clear himself, he fell into such deep disgrace that from that time "his life was a species of death." His fine was enormous, which, added to the debts left by his father, completely crushed him. He retired to his manor of Welperfield, "ignominiously and irrevocably deprived of his barony," and there he "languished and pined away through grief." Within two years he had travelled "the well-trodden path of all flesh," and was buried in a tomb near that of his father, in the Abbey Church at Waltham.

Passlewe meantime had filled De Nevill's office as High Forester or Justiciary of all the royal forests, which gave him supreme power over all the officers of the forests, and he soon deprived Munfitchet of his forestership of Essex. The triple offices of Justice, Spiritual Adviser to the King, and Assistant Keeper of the Royal Treasury gave Passlewe immense power, and he enjoyed a great triumph, but not for long. Six years after the death of De Nevill, Passlewe's body followed that of his great victim to the same famous Essex Abbey. It was at Waltham that he died, and a magnificent tomb was erected over his remains, but neither this tomb nor that of the two De Nevills can now

be seen; a circumstance probably due to the zeal of the Puritan soldiers of Cromwell. Matthew Paris makes an entry in his chronicles in words which would have served admirably as an epitaph: "On the 6th of June died Robert Passelewe at Waltham, Archdeacon of Lewes. Though a clerk and a prelate, he did not hesitate in his adherence to the king, to impoverish many people in many and divers ways in order to fatten his sovereign—but his deeds follow him."

In the case of Munfichet, however, King Henry proclaimed, "that for a fine which our trusty and beloved Richard de Munfichet hath made to us, we have restored to him the Bailiewick of all our forest of Essex, of which the same Richard, at the time when Robert Passlewe was Justice of our forest, was deprived by the judgment of our court." The proclamation further stated that Richard had the custody of the royal houses, the keepership of the park at Havering "with the appurtenances and liberties to that Bailiewick belonging," and also the "power to appoint and remove all foresters and bailiffs of the same forest."

De Munfichet gave up his office to Thomas de Clare. The name of Clare is also on the roll of the immortal twenty-five of *Magna Carta*. He held the stewardship of the Essex forest for twenty-two years before retiring in favour of his son, Gilbert de Clare. Gilbert's name is handed down as the

leader of the van at the Battle of Bannockburn, at which he was killed, and it is interesting to recall in connection with the war with Scotland, that the family of the Bruce were Essex landlords and forest officials. By the sergeancy of keeping the king's woods—the royal chases of Hatfield Regis and Writtle—De Brus held Osterly or Hoastly Park, outside Writtle on the road to Ongar.

Gilbert de Clare had, in 1307, parted with the stewardship to his brother Richard. When Richard died, his two aunts — his heiresses — brought the office to their respective husbands. Through one of these—Giles de Vadelsmere—the office passed to his heiress and sister, the Countess of John de Vere, the seventh Earl of Oxford, in whose family it remained, with a few interruptions, until that illustrious house—the most noble on record, according to Dugdale—became extinct in 1703.

The Countess Matilda did not appoint her husband to the stewardship, and not until she granted the office to Aubrey the tenth earl were the duties undertaken by an Oxford in person. During Aubrey's tenure of office, the title of Warden of the forest is applied to him, and this title alternates with that of Steward, until it finally became Lord Warden. Aubrey was a friend of the Black Prince, and was allowed one hundred marks a year for his attendance on the prince. In addition to his wardenship he held the custody of the castles

at Headley, Thundersley, and Rayleigh, with the royal parks surrounding them. When his nephew, the ninth earl, who was raised by the extravagant Richard the Second to the honour and title of Duke of Ireland, was found guilty of treason by the parliament of Henry the Fourth, Aubrey became implicated also. On his nephew's death he was, however, reinstated in his offices and honours, and sat again in Parliament, "right humbly thanking our lord the king for his good and gracious lordship."

There is an interesting story told of a forester in the days of Henry the Fifth. The hero of Agincourt was engaged in archery at the palace of Havering-atte-Bower, with some of his nobles, among whom was Simon de Bois, the forester in question. De Bois distinguished himself so greatly as an archer that the king in a merry mood ordered that his name should henceforth be "Archer." The district of Theydon Bois, one of the most thickly wooded spots in the present forest, receives its name from the family of De Bois, and it is interesting to note that a family of the name of Archer still live in the neighbourhood.

During the Wars of the Roses the eleventh Earl of Oxford and his heir were beheaded for their adherence to the House of Lancaster, and the office of warden of the forest lapsed to the crown. Henry Tudor appointed the Lord Fitzwalter as Chief

Justice of the king's forests south of the Trent, but Fitzwalter held office for one year only. He supported the cause of Perkin Warbeck, and was beheaded in consequence. By Act of Parliament the Oxfords were then reinstated as Hereditary Wardens of the forest of Essex.

King Henry the Eighth considered the wardenship of the Essex forests a sufficiently powerful and lucrative office to fill it in his own royal person, and the Oxfords therefore granted it to him. As Warden of the forest, Henry not only had full executive power—and his keepers and rangers adored him—but the perquisites of the office were beneficial to the Privy Purse.

The wardenship descended to Henry's children, who, unmindful of the Oxfords' hereditary claim, appointed their respective favourites as their lieutenants, virtually holding the wardenship in their own hands. Lord Rich, of Reformation fame, ever ready to advance himself, accepted among a multiplicity of offices that of lieutenant of the forest and custodian of the royal parks and chases. The palace which the Lords Rich erected at Leigh's Priory, thirty odd miles from London, midway between Chelmsford and Braintree, was enriched with the spoils of many a dissolved religious house, and is described as "a secular elysium, a worldly paradise, a heaven upon earth, if there be any," leading a clerical visitor on one occasion to say to

Lord Rich: "My lord, you had need make sure of Heaven, or else when you die you will be a great loser." A tower and other ruins remain to satisfy the interested visitor of to-day, and the charming country around well repays a visit.

In Queen Mary's reign, Sir Edward Walgrave or Waldegrave was lieutenant of the forest. He was one of the Princess Mary's household at Copt Hall who were imprisoned by the orders of the council of Edward the Sixth. The lieutenancy was part of the reward which his royal mistress, when queen, bestowed upon him for his faithful adherence; but as soon as Mary died, he was deprived of his office and committed to the Tower, where he died.

The Chief Justice of the royal forests in Mary's reign was the Earl of Sussex—there are tombs in Boreham Church, near Chelmsford, to the Earls of Sussex. His duties as Deputy of Ireland prevented his attendance at the Justice Seat—the supreme forest court, held at Ilford, towards the close of Mary's reign, and he therefore appointed the following gentlemen to serve at the court. The Solicitor-General as Justice; the Lieutenant, Sir Edward Waldegrave; Sir William Petre, Sergeant Browne, and Sir Henry Tirrell, whom the queen commanded to attend.

Waldegrave is mentioned above; Petre elsewhere as one of the deputation to Mary at Copt Hall. Browne and Tirrell were zealous supporters

of the queen's religious persecution in Essex. Sergeant Browne of Weald Hall is remembered as the enemy of the Brentwood martyr, William Hunter. Sir Henry Tirrell vigorously hunted out the Protestants who met in his woods for service, declaring that his property was thereby desecrated and his "woods polluted with sermons."

Queen Elizabeth inherited the Grand Wardenship, as it was called in her day, and appointed her favourite, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, as her lieutenant. Leicester, who had acquired Wanstead Hall and much land in various parts of the forest, commenced his connection with the Essex forests as Keeper of Hainault Walk and Chapel Lodge Walk; a post granted him for life at a fee of eightpence per day, to be paid out of the Treasury. He afterwards obtained the highest forestal office open to him, rising from the lieutenancy of Waltham Forest to be Lord Chief Justice of all the forests south of the Trent.

There are two interesting grants of forest land by Queen Elizabeth to her trumpeter and armourer respectively. The former, William Hunt, had married Susan, the widow of Egham, the keeper of Walthamstow Walk, and as Egham had received no salary for two years, his relict and the trumpeter were granted five acres of land and power to build their new house upon it. The armourer—one Tuggell—was granted nine acres of the queen's

manor of Barking, as a reward for "the perilous service of the said Andrew Tuggell heretofore to the said lady the queen, and her predecessors done in war, he being now old and decrepit."

The keepership of the palace and park at Havering Elizabeth granted to her treasurer, Sir Thomas Heneage, who afterwards appointed his secretary, Samuel Fox, the son of the famous author of *The Book of Martyrs*, to the keepership of Havering.

When James the First inquired into matters forestal, it was found that the ancient office of warden of the forest had been the hereditary honour of the Earls of Oxford "from time immemorial," and it was therefore re-granted to them. Stringent measures were then adopted for dealing with the offences of vert and venison, and a forest gaol was erected at Stratford for the imprisonment of offenders. Stratford was chosen because from its position near Bow Bridge travellers through the forest going towards London could be easily searched while paying the necessary tolls. These tolls were the perquisites of the warden, and were demanded of all wayfarers by the forest officers. They included the payment of fourpence for every carriage on wheels, twopence for one not on wheels, *i.e.*, a sled, "conducted or going through the street of Stratford Langthorne within the said forest;" fourpence for every pack of wool whether on cart or horseback, twopence for every half pack and

horses laden with "wanty" or "wombety," and a small charge for "cheminage," that is for foot passage through the forest.

The tolls were demanded of travellers even after the gaol had disappeared, but gradually it became apparent to those who grudged payment that there was no prison to receive them if they refused, and the custom was broken through.

The forest officers under Charles the First were naturally those who were willing to be his tools. Foremost among these was Lord Rich, the Earl of Holland; who with Justice Jones and Baron Trevor and others were favourable to the king's policy of shipmoney, benevolences, and the revival of the ancient bounds of the forest, as means of raising a revenue. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the jury, at the famous Justice Seat held at Stratford in 1635, gave way, and agreed to bring the whole of Essex again under forest laws.

A brilliant exception among these obsequious gentlemen was the Steward of the Forest Courts, Oliver St. John, a "man reserved and of a dark and clouded countenance," who was a prominent figure in Republican days. As Solicitor-General and Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, he brought his knowledge of matters forestal to bear upon the famous trial of Lord Strafford. Speaking in the House of Lords when Strafford, the great enemy of the nation's liberties, was impeached before the

peers, St. John, in support of the sentence of death passed upon Strafford by the House of Commons, spoke as a forest officer thus: "It is true we give law to hares and deer, because they be Beasts of Chase. It was never accounted either cruelty or foul play to knock foxes and wolves on the head, as they can be found, because these be Beasts of Prey. The Warrener sets traps for polecats and other vermin for preservation of the Warren." The parallel was complete, and Strafford's life was demanded for the safeguard of the nation. Lord Rich, the Forest Justice, was also beheaded by the Republicans a few years later.

During the Commonwealth the offices of Chief Justice, Warden of the Forest, and others were not exercised, but on the restoration of royalty, the De Veres were again in power as Warden and Justice. Henry, the last of the Earls of Oxford, appointed as his deputy his sub-warden Sir Thomas Edmunds, giving him full executive power during his "absence beyond seas." Oxford was a prominent figure at the coronation of Charles the Second, when he bore the sword of state, as he did also at the three succeeding coronations. He was honoured with the Order of the Garter, and drove fully robed through the London Parks with the Duke of Monmouth, much to the consternation of Samuel Pepys, who remarked upon it in his diary. Pepys wrote much against the earl, but Oxford continued to prosper.

He became Privy Councillor, was gazetted Lieutenant-General of the army, and appointed Warden of the New Forest in addition to Waltham Forest.

In James the Second's reign Oxford fell into disgrace. He was stripped of titles and dignities, and his estates were granted to the Romanist Lord Petre; but on the landing of William of Orange the earl was again in favour, and reinstated in his former proud position. Macaulay writes of the earl as a man "of inoffensive temper and courtly manners," but withal "a man of loose morals. His only son predeceased him, so that, when Oxford died soon after he had carried the sword of state at the coronation of Queen Anne, the long line of the twenty Earls of Oxford came to an end.

There still remains at Hedingham Castle—forty miles in direct line from London—a grand old Norman keep, the sole remnant of the great pile which was the home of the De Veres for so many centuries. The keep, which dominates the village, and is a conspicuous landmark for many miles around, stands in imposing grandeur upon the hill—a worthy monument, reflecting the wealth and might of the extinct house of Oxford.

The decided similarity between the design of Hedingham and Rochester Castles strengthens the belief that the eminent Norman architect, Bishop Gundulph, who built Rochester, was the designer of Hedingham also. So long as the keep stands—

and it bears its great age sturdily and well—rural Essex can boast the proud distinction of possessing the largest Norman arch of its kind in the world. It spans with a grand curve the Armoury or Banqueting Hall, facing a series of smaller arches, enriched with decorated mouldings, which support a gallery whose wooden beams are fast crumbling into insecurity.

In the great hall, now so deserted and still, tenanted only by birds and bats, first resounded the buffoonery and feasting of the proud Normans. From its gallery Matilda, the unfortunate consort of the usurper Stephen, gazed down upon her protectors, and longed for that hour of union with her husband which never came. Here echoed and re-echoed the shouts of the Crusaders. Within it gathered some of those defiant ones, who scorned the tyranny of King John, and worthily withstood the royal siege. Here, in all probability, the powerful thirteenth earl entertained Henry Tudor, and was repaid with such base ingratitude. Here moved the virgin monarch on a visit to the sixteenth earl—a keen sportsman; and here courtiers of the stately Tudor times and the gay Stuart period congregated, before the wilful neglect of the nineteenth earl caused the noble fabric to fall into irrevocable disrepair and subsequent ruin.

Sir Thomas Edmunds, Treasurer of the king's household and the sub-warden under the late earl,

was succeeded in the lieutenancy by Sir William Hicks of Leyton, an ancestor of Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the late Chancellor of the Exchequer. Hicks was honoured by Charles the Second with a visit at his seat of Ruckholts, a place Pepys was greatly disgusted with, especially Sir William's poor hospitality.

Ruckholts, the rook wood, or the rocky or ridge wood, stood about a mile south of the old parish church of Low Leyton, in which are tombs to the Hicks family. Sir William is represented as lieutenant of Waltham Forest, baton in hand to denote his office, though his attitude is a recumbent one. During his tenure of office, Hicks was an offender against both vert and venison, and neglected to issue the orders of the Chief Justice that a restraint be put upon the killing of the deer, greatly thinned during the Civil Wars; but a fine of fifty pounds showed him the error of his ways.

After the death of the last Earl of Oxford, his widow, with her co-trustee the Duke of Exeter, sold the wardenship to the Earl of Lindsey for one thousand five hundred pounds. The countess at first retained the custodianship of Havering, but after a year this was also placed in the hands of the earl's trustees—Sir George Manners and Sir Robert Cotton, and the name of Oxford ceased to be associated with the Essex woods.

The Earl of Lindsey, encumbered with debts,

transferred the office of warden to his son, Montague Bertie, who agreed to pay the debts, amounting to some seven thousand pounds, in return for the office. Bertie, Lord Willoughby, continued in office after he had succeeded to the earldom, but his son, the Marquis of Lindsey, sold the wardenship for five thousand pounds to Sir Richard Child, son of the famous London banker, Sir Josiah Child, resident at Wanstead. The transaction did not at first include the right of custody of the royal park at Havering, but the dowager countess, in consideration of a further sum of one thousand six hundred pounds, finally parted with the remainder of the rights and privileges of the time-honoured office of warden to Child, who had been the lieutenant. Sir Richard was created Baron Newton, Viscount Castlemain, and finally Earl Tylney. On his manor of Wanstead was erected the May-pole which had stood in the Strand, long unused.

> "There stood I only to receive abuse,
> But here converted to a nobler use,"

for it was used to support a telescope, one hundred and twenty-five feet long,

> "T'observe the motions of th' ethereal lord."

The ancient and historic manor house of Wanstead, with its romantic associations with the two sisters, Queens Mary and Elizabeth, with the un-

worthy favourite Dudley, Earl of Leicester, and later with King James and the notorious Duke of Buckingham, was pulled down by Sir Richard Child in 1715. The new erection was planned by the distinguished architect Colin Campbell, on such a princely scale as to admit of no rival in Europe. The whole scheme was, however, not carried out, but the magnificent mansion that arose in place of the old manor house was deservedly admitted to be a palace fit for royalty, a complete triumph of architectural skill.

A gentleman, writing of Wanstead House in 1724, speaks of it as "The palace of Wanstead, built by the earl in a spacious forest, very flat for many miles and well planted with trees and deer." He thus describes the approach:—"You come up to this palace from the village of Wanstead by an avenue of above half a mile long from which run nine other smaller avenues into the forest, with each a statue on a pedestal as big as the life." These statues, the writer decided, somewhat obstructed the view. The main avenue ended "at a pond, or rather a lake, being a basin of water of near half a mile in circumference on which my lord keeps a gondola for his pleasure."

Horace Walpole visited the house in 1755, and while admitting that the "disposition of the house and prospect are very fine," criticises the gardens as "wretched." He commends himself for refusing

various *objets d'art* which the earl offered him, and brought away " only a haunch of venison."

Twenty years afterwards, when Harrison visited Wanstead, the " building calculated for the residence of the greatest subject in Britain " was, he writes, " inhabited only by a few servants," for the earl, the second earl, grandson of the first, though proud of his heritage, preferred to live in Italy. Harrison describes the view to be obtained from what he terms " the back front " of the house as a " most beautiful prospect of the river "—the little Roding which fed the ornamental lakes—while " beyond it the walks and wildernesses extend to a great distance, rising up a hill," probably Langdon Hill, sixteen miles to the east, or the ridge at Theydon Mount, ten miles north of Wanstead, " on the top of which the sight is lost by the woods, and the whole country as far as the eye can see appears one continued garden."

Earl Tylney died in 1784, and his title died with him. His heir, Sir James Long, added the name of Tylney to his own and was known as Tylney-Long. He inherited the office of Lord Warden of the forest with its many advantages, stating on one occasion that his " claim to red and fallow deer in the forest is without stint." He died while his son and heir was yet a minor, and the duties of the wardenship were executed by his widow, assisted by the lieutenant, Lord Henniker, who had a house at Stratford.

The death of the boy changed the whole current of affairs. His only sister became one of the richest heiresses in England, and her hand in marriage was eagerly sought and finally obtained by the Hon. Wellesley Pole.

It is interesting that at this period Wanstead House should have become the home of the exiled Louis XVIII. of France with other princes of the House of Bourbon, and that a Wellesley, uncle to the famous Duke of Wellington, became through his wife the owner of Wanstead.

After his marriage the Hon. Wellesley Pole became co-warden of the forest with his wife, and at the next forest Court of Attachments the steward entered upon the records that they were married and "took the names of William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley" — the gentleman's extravagance over his newly-acquired name was characteristic of him—" and Catherine Tylney-Long-Wellesley," and that William and Catherine "are warden of the forest in right of the said Catherine," and that the Hon. William "took his seat at this court accordingly."

Not only did he take his seat, but he soon lorded it over the court, though sensible of the fact that he held his office through his wife, whose name he insisted should be placed with his own at the head of the roll; the other officers following from the lieutenant and verderers, through the ranks of the

keepers and rangers, the forest beadle bringing up the rear—as for a surety a beadle would.

The Honourable William was the last active Lord Warden of the Essex Forests, and he behaved as if he knew he was to be the last of all, and decided to go out with flourish of trumpets. He had always been grossly extravagant, but seventy to eighty thousand pounds a year would appear to be ample for even the most prodigal of squanderers, but no; for in less than ten years the whole had gone, and he was deeply in debt. The following extract from *Bailey's Magazine* will help to explain why. "Mr. Long-Pole-Wellesley played high jinks at Wanstead House, where he kept a pack of staghounds in a style of princely magnificence to hunt the wild deer. His servants were dressed in Lincoln Green. There were constant hunt breakfasts at the "Eagle" at Snaresbrook, then in the middle of an open waste, where all were entertained at Mr. Wellesley's expense. Everything was done with the most reckless extravagance, and he would scatter sovereigns to countrymen in the hunting field as readily as other liberal sportsmen would give shillings or sixpences."

The delighted rustics, who found the forest a veritable "Tom Tiddler's ground," fervently re-echoed the famous line in "Rejected Addresses,"—

"Long may Long Tylney Wellesley Long Pole live!"

His life in Wanstead was, however, but a short one. Harassing creditors drove him away, and he escaped from them in an open boat down the Thames.

The magnificent art treasures, collected by the Earls Tylney, the unique furniture, and all the household goods were brought under the hammer, to meet, if possible, the claims of the creditors. Though good prices were realised, the sum obtained was totally inadequate. The great mansion was offered, but as no purchaser came to the rescue, the noble pile, "a palace fit for the abode of gentle and royal blood," was pulled down and sold in lots. The family portraits, at first withheld, also found their way to the auction room, and the gentle Catherine was left a pauper. With her fortune squandered, all her treasures sold, her beautiful home remorselessly levelled to the ground, her husband a cowardly deserter, no wonder she sank beneath the blow and died broken-hearted.

Wellesley soon married again, bringing poverty and trouble upon his second wife as he had upon Catherine. His union with the second lady "added an incident of romance to the peerage," remarks the *Athenæum*, in a notice of the countess's death, for Wellesley had succeeded to the head of his family as Earl of Mornington. "Only about a year after their marriage," continues the account, "this lady was for a brief time an inmate of St. George's Workhouse, and more than once had to

apply at Police Courts for temporary relief." The countess, however, despite these "incidents of romance," outlived the earl.

Upon his return to England, Earl Mornington again presided at the forest courts, which during his enforced absence had been held at intervals of thirteen and eleven years. He then haughtily informed the verderers, who had presided in his absence, that he considered their duties to be those of a jury, reserving to himself the right to pass sentence, though he expressed his willingness to consider their suggestions.

In the early history of the forest, there were three Forest Courts; the Woodmote, the Swainmote, and the Justice Seat. The Woodmote originally dealt with offences against the woodland, but afterwards judged all minor offences against the forest laws, and was known as the Court of Attachment. It was also frequently spoken of as the Verderers' or Forty-day Court, because it was held every forty days, and was presided over by the verderers, who judged all cases within their province, and gave a first hearing to more serious offences. The warden or his lieutenant were not required to sit at the court, and the habit of the Earl of Mornington, in setting aside the judicial powers of the verderers, was an assumption of office.

The verderers sat also at the Swainmote, at which court they were assisted by a jury of forest

freeholders, who were summoned at intervals by the forest beadle. Anciently, the Swainmote met three times a year, at the time that the king's agistors came to agist his woods, and when they received his pannage, and at the beginning of the Fence Month. The steward of the Forest Courts recorded the proceedings, enrolled licences, and swore in the forest officers, and charged all persons found guilty of offence to appear at the next Court of Justice Seat.

The Justice Seat was the highest of the Forest Courts, and was held under the king's writ by the Lord Chief Justice in Eyre, to pass judgment upon cases already heard in the lesser courts. It met at one period regularly each year, or at intervals of not more than three years, and was summoned by the sheriff of the county, forty days before the sitting.

Previous to 1670, the warden of the Essex forest was frequently Justice in Eyre of the forests south of the Trent, but after the circuit conducted by the Earl of Oxford in that year, the duties of the Justice in Eyre were undertaken by the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas.

A picturesque ceremony at the Justice Seat was the homage paid to the Justice by the Chief Forester and the Chief Woodward. Each delivered kneeling the symbol of his office, the forester his horn, the woodward his hatchet, both articles being

retained by the marshal during the court proceedings.

The Justice Seat was usually held at one of the places on the king's highway from London to Colchester. Stratford Langthorne was the principal

Approach to the King's Head, Chigwell.

centre for the holding of the supreme Forest Court, Stratford-at-Bow, Ilford, and Chelmsford being the other places most frequently mentioned. Stratford was at times the meeting-place for the Swainmote, which met also at Brentwood, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill or other convenient centre within the forest.

For hundreds of years the forest Court of Attachment was held at Chigwell. From the seventeenth century downwards the place of meeting was at "The King's Head" in the delightful old room known to-day as "The Chester Room." The verderers had a private wine-cellar at the inn which was kept well stocked by the following ingenious device, which appears on the court roll of June 3, 1723:—

"Ordered yt every person yt has the permission of a Lycense to shoot, hunt, etc., in ye fforest of Waltham, before he be permitted to enter ye same, shall pay to ye officers at ye court when the same shall be entered 3 dozn. of Wine."

"The King's Head" is noted as a favourite resort of Charles Dickens, who wrote to his friend Forster an enthusiastic account of "the greatest place in the world" with "such beautiful forest scenery." That was in 1841, ten years before the destruction of Hainault Forest, which stretched on all sides of the old inn. "In the summer or autumn evenings," wrote Dickens in *Barnaby Rudge*, "when the glow of the setting sun fell upon the oak and chestnut trees of the adjacent forest, the old house, partaking of its lustre, seemed their fit companion." He tells of the traditional visit to the inn of Queen Elizabeth. The story, or as Dickens named it, "the legend," was that not only had the queen "slept there one night, while upon a hunting

expedition, to wit, in a certain oak-panelled room with a deep bay window, but that next morning,

THE KING'S HEAD, CHIGWELL.

while standing on a mounting block before the door, with one foot in the stirrup, the virgin monarch

had then and there boxed and cuffed an unlucky page for some neglect of duty."

The Forest Courts continued to be held at "The King's Head" until their powers were transferred to the Commissioners of Woods and Forests, but an attempt to revive the ancient Swainmote was made a half century since, in order to check the illegal enclosures, which threatened the very life of the forest; but when an Act of Parliament finally saved the forest for the people, it abolished the legal powers of the forest officers.

The hereditary post of forester, steward, custodian and warden, as it was variously called during the centuries, carried with it a dignity and power equal to that of sheriff of the county. It was, moreover, a most lucrative appointment, as can be gathered from the fact that when Hainault Forest was destroyed in 1851, a sum of five thousand two hundred and fifty pounds was paid to Earl Mornington as compensation. The fines imposed upon offenders against the woodlands, but not against the deer, were the perquisites of the warden. All deer-browsing wood was theirs, and all animals found straying and unclaimed upon the forest. When wood from the forest was felled, the second best oak was the property of the wardens. Both buyer and seller of timber upon forest soil paid to the warden a commission of one penny in the shilling. The same fine was exacted from the sale of bush-wood, from

covert or hedgerow, and for every such sale a presentation of a bow and a broad arrow was made to the warden.

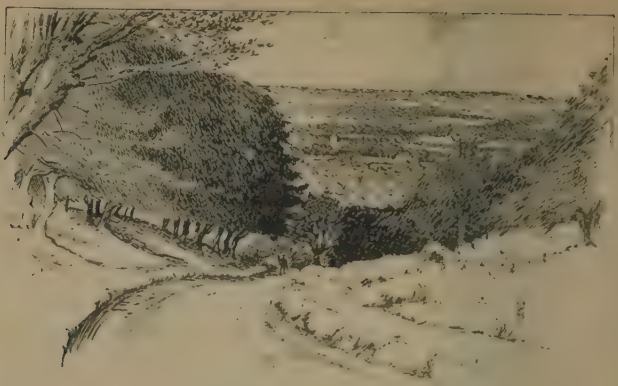
In addition to his legal perquisites, the Earl Mornington was notorious for making money out of his office on every possible occasion. He died in 1857, and was succeeded by his son, who lived chiefly abroad and took no active part in the forest administration. He appointed Richard Buckeley Glasse and Alfred Collyer as his deputies, who held the ancient and time-honoured office of warden in trust for the Earl of Mornington until that post was finally abolished by the Epping Forest Act of 1872.

The last holder of the lieutenancy was the Right Hon. Sir George Cockburn. He was a retired admiral and had been the friend of Nelson. As a riding forester he was vigilant in his office, and kept the forest walks open by promptly destroying the palings erected by encroachers. Towards the close of his lieutenancy, however, the worthy admiral, as the owner of forest soil, disregarded the rights of the commoners, and was numbered among offenders.

When the forest offices were abolished, and compensation was made to the late holders, it was felt that the warden was but little entitled to compensation, because of former irregular proceedings; and though the claim was but for one thousand

pounds, only three hundred pounds were granted by the arbitrator, Lord Hobhouse.

The forest is now managed by the corporation of London as conservators, with four verderers, who are elected by the freeholders of the various places within the forest bounds, while in the words of the Act, " with a view to the preservation of the ancient connection of the crown with Epping Forest," her Majesty, Queen Victoria, was empowered to appoint a ranger, which office is filled by his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, after whom is named the Connaught Waters near Chingford.



CHAPTER VII

THE RELIGIOUS BODIES AND THEIR FORESTAL PRIVILEGES

A monk there was, afair for the maistrie
An outrydere that loved venerye. . . .
He yaf not of that text, a pulled hen
That saith that hunters be not holy men.
Grey houndes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight
Of priking and of hunting for the hare
Was al his lust, for no cost would he spare.

A STUDY of the monk portrayed by Chaucer in his delightful *Canterbury Tales*, proves the readiness with which the ecclesiastics of old mingled in the boisterous sports of the chase to the neglect of those religious duties, consistent with a life of pious seclusion within the cloister walls. There appears no doubt that the "Father of English poetry" gravely suspected his monk of greater proficiency in the art of hunting than in divinity.

Many of the monarchs of England had indeed endeavoured to place a check upon the indulgences of the priests; but the spectacle of a jovial hunting cleric, on " fatte hors and joly and gaye sadeles and bridilis ryngynge be the weye "—as Wyclif scornfully wrote of them—must have been for centuries a frequent sight in the forest of Essex, where ecclesiastics, both clerical and abbatial, were granted woods in which to hunt the fox, the wild cat, and the hare, were privileged to hunt the deer occasionally, and grants of live deer were sometimes made to them to stock their enclosed woods.

The association of the Bishops of London with the forest is as ancient as their office. There is indeed no testimony that Bishop Ceadda or Chad, the first bishop of the East Sexe, whose diocese included London, hunted in the forest while endeavouring to firmly establish Christianity among the people; his name being preserved to posterity by Chadwell in Essex and Shadwell in East London —the sites of his two holy wells. The saintly Erkenwald, founder of the noble Barking Abbey, and the fourth Bishop of St. Paul's, may indeed have joined the seven Saxon monarchs which tradition states hunted in the forest near Barking, but if so, there is no record of his prowess, though his zeal for his religion is vouched for by the stories that, when he was quite old, he visited the dwellers of the wild forest, and preached to

them from the cart in which he journeyed from London.

The earliest mention of a Bishop of London with matters forestal is contained in the quaint rhyming charter of Edward the Confessor, in which the Bishop Wolfston witnesses with Sweyn of Essex the appointment of the Norman Peverel to the office of keeper to a section of the forest. Whether the charter be genuine or no, the witness of Wolfston is in perfect accord with the ancient office of the bishops.

Doomsday Book records a goodly list of manors in Essex, which were the property of the Bishops of London, and their cathedral. Over thirty places are named, many of which had been granted centuries before, in early Saxon times. Some of the manors were the property of the bishops, while others were endowments to the cathedral, and the name of " Bishop's " or " St. Paul's " was added as a distinguishing appellation. These names in a few cases remain to the present day. Thus, Wickham Bishops, the private property of the prelates, is distinguished from Wickham St. Paul's, which, with Belchamp St. Paul's and Chingford St. Paul's, were granted for the maintenance of the cathedral.

The Bishops of London had residential palaces at Chelmsford, and at Braintree, and were frequently in residence at Colchester, where they had several houses, and a few acres of land. In

addition to their palaces, they owned the castle at Bishops Stortford, named after them. Chelmsford owes its advance from a small out-of-the-way village to the county town of Essex entirely to the former influence of the Bishops of London. Their manor of Bishops Hall—long the residence of the prelates—lay near the junction of the river Cam with the Chelmer, and Bishop Maurice built a bridge over the Cam, the convenience of which soon diverted the traffic from the old Roman way, which led to Colchester, through Writtle, and thus brought travellers and pilgrims through Chelmsford. A market was obtained for the village by a later bishop, and its prosperity was assured. The present tasteful little stone structure, which spans the stream at the ancient crossing place, is to-day known as Bishop's Bridge.

London's prelates were therefore continually traversing the forest on their way to or from their cathedral and their Essex estates, and enjoyed the privilege, granted to all the great ecclesiastics and the nobles, of varying the monotony of the journey by hunting through the forest glades. The Charter of Forests provided that on such occasions "it shall be lawful for them to take one or two deer by the view of the forester, if he shall be present, but if not, he shall cause a horn to be sounded, lest it should seem a theft." In the reign of Edward the First, the Bishop of London was found to be an

offender against the forest laws. In addition to his harriers, coursing the forest according to privilege, he had huntsmen and others carrying bows and arrows, thereby infringing the laws of Richard the First. The offence occurred "at his time of coming to his manors in Essex," and as bows and arrows were not needed to chase the timid hare, his action savoured of deer-stalking, and as such was condemned.

King John was lavish in his gifts to the Bishops of London. His presents included at one time twenty live deer and two stags, and he further granted the bishop a tithe of all the king's deer taken in the forest of Essex—a very substantial grant. The tithes were so considerable, swelled by many illegal practices, that Bishop Richard was led to voice the very unclerical opinion, "that the payment of tithes seemed in some sort to make amends for all illicit gains."

Certain lands were held of the Dean and Chapter of St. Paul's by the annual service of supplying the deer used at the Feasts of the Apostle St. Paul. In the fourteenth century the lordship of West Lee was so held by Sir William de Baud of Corringham, not far from Canvey Island. The De Baud family provided annually a buck on June 29—the Feast of the Commemoration,—and a doe on January 25—the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. The delivery of the animals at the

cathedral occasioned a ceremony suggestive of the ritual of ancient mythology. According to Dugdale, the Dean and Chapter, "apparalled in copes and proper vestments, with garlands of roses on their heads," awaited the deer, which was carried in procession to the steps of the high altar. The head was then separated from the body, but whether decapitation took place in ancient sacrificial manner is not recorded. The carcase was straightway sent to the kitchens to be baked, while the antlered head was affixed to a pole and borne aloft before the cross, in procession round the cathedral and out at the west door; where, standing amidst the bedecked priests, the keeper who had brought the deer sounded the "death" on his horn. Others, stationed about the city, answered with their horns, and the ceremony came to an end.

The representatives of the De Baud family, who attended with the buck, received at the hands of the dean's chamberlain "twelve pence sterling for their entertainment, but nothing when they brought the doe." The men with horns had each "four pence in money and their dinner," while the keeper was provided "during his stay with meat, drink, and lodging, and five shillings in money at his going away, together with a loaf of bread having on it a picture of St. Paul." This interesting but ludicrous ceremony continued to be practised until the days of Queen Elizabeth. It looks, says Camden, like a

pagan custom crept into Christian practice, and he suggested that it was perhaps a survival of the ceremony which was enacted in the Temple of Diana, formerly occupying the site of St. Paul's

Abbey Church of the Holy Cross of Waltham.

Cathedral, and that the owners of the same land were obliged to furnish the deer required for the sacrifice.

The Abbot and Convent of the Holy Cross of Waltham, who dwelt on the site of the hunting lodge erected by Tovi-le-prude—Canute's standard bearer—had from the time of their foundation special privileges in the surrounding forest. No

less than ten of the seventeen lordships granted them by King Harold, their founder, were within the area of the royal forest, large tracts of which the Norman kings permitted them to enclose. The enclosure was marked by hedge and ditch, each regulated to permit the deer to jump them; or when special favour was shown the convent, the hedge was high, and the ditch deep, to exclude the deer, and render the wood exempt from the visitation of the forest regarders.

A totally different motive impelled Richard the Second to grant the Abbot of Waltham the power to enclose some land three miles from the abbey near Copped Hall. The place had become a receptacle for robbers, and formed a convenient poaching ground, harmful alike to the beasts of the forest and the people who passed that way.

Occasionally the kings exchanged land with religious bodies; thus the woods round Woodford and Loughton, the property of Waltham, were exchanged for land at Nazeing, which, because of his reverence for the Holy Cross of Waltham, Edward II. permitted the abbot to enclose as a park.

In addition to their hunting rights, the dogs of the Abbot of Waltham, as also those of the Bishop of London, were exempt from the forest law, which required all dogs to be expeditated, that is, to have the claws of their feet struck off, a protective measure which rendered dogs unfit to chase the

deer. The convent was also licensed to fish from the Lea—"the gentle Lea" of Izaak Walton—which, being a forest "bounder," belonged to the king; but the greatest forestal privilege granted to the abbots was the forestership of the hundred of Waltham, acquired for them by Richard the Second, a post which brought with it special emoluments and power.

The important part played by Waltham in the history of England is shown in other parts of this work, but for the present purpose its history can be abridged as "the Church History of England," —the words of Thomas Fuller—an incumbent of Waltham from 1648 to 1658, and author of the *Worthies of England*.

The proximity of Waltham to London—thirteen miles as the crow flies — and its situation in the royal forest, caused Waltham to become a favourite resort for the kings of England, as has been shown. The same reasons made Stratford Abbey rich and prosperous. It was situated but three miles from London, just within the boundary of the forest. Here Henry the Third, during the last stages of his war with the barons, made the abbey his headquarters, when assaults were made daily upon the city of London. Here, within the Abbey, when the war was over, the king received the Pope's legate, Cardinal Ottabini, and was reconciled to the barons.

In the reign of Henry the Eighth, the abbots of Waltham and Stratford were in great favour with the king, and assisted at many important functions of both a gay and grave nature, as the baptism of the Princess Elizabeth, and the funeral of Jane Seymour—the latter a sight which the king shrank from, and refused to attend.

Both abbeys were situated in the valley of the Lea, which was fruitful in religious establishments, for two nunneries were built near to the two monasteries, and though the ladies placed themselves on the opposite bank of the river, they were yet in the immediate vicinity of their brothers of the cowl. The nunnery of Cheshunt was near Waltham, that of Stratford-at-Bow near Stratford Langthorne, the Stratford-atte-Bowe nunnery being immortalised by Chaucer in his tribute to the French which the pretty prioress—

> "... spake ful faire and fetishly
> After the scole of Stratford atte-Bowe,
> For French of Paris was to hir unknowne."

Though the two nunneries were not on Essex soil, they enjoyed certain rights and privileges in the forest of the lord the king. The proximity of nunnery to monastery, and the discovery of what were doubtless water conduits or sewage channels, has given rise to the usual traditions of secret subterranean passages between the two houses. Though underground communication was not in-

dulged in, the sporting instinct, strong in the monastic breast, led to undoubted nightly revels between the monks of Waltham and the fair inmates of the Cheshunt nunnery. The knowledge of such a meeting was taken advantage of by a Sir Harry Colt, a favourite of Henry the Eighth, "for his merry conceits," who one night, for the royal amusement, played a practical joke upon the unsuspecting monks. He suddenly left the king overnight, with a promise to meet him in the morning, and going to a conveniently narrow part of the marsh, he "pitched a buckstall," similar to that used for catching the deer, and stationed his confederates for a "drive." When the monks issued from the nunnery with some of the "obliging" nuns, a great noise was suddenly made behind them, in order that in their anxiety to escape notice, they should extinguish their lanterns, and hurry to their capture. The plan worked exceedingly well; for the monks, "whose feet without eyes," writes the chronicler Farmer, "could find the way home in so frequented a path," ran themselves *en masse* into the buckstall. There they were forced to remain in indignation and dismay until the king was brought in the morning to view Sir Harry's capture. When the monarch, expecting to see deer, saw monks and nuns, he burst into great laughter, and vowed "he had often seen sweeter, but never more beautiful, or fatter venison."

The bishops and mitred abbots of the eastern counties, whose attendance at the Parliament or Court brought them through the forest of Essex on their way to London, are frequently mentioned as the recipients of grants of land, and gifts of deer from the forest. As an example, the Bishop of Ely and the Abbot of Bury St. Edmunds were granted land at Harlow on the direct London road, which they might use for a halting place. From their woods in the sub-forest of Rokey they were permitted to take timber for firewood and other purposes, and were allowed to till the soil. The bishops' wood, becoming neglected, was seized by the king, but the bishop promising greater care in the future, the wood was returned. King John granted the Bishop of Ely ten deer and two stags from the Essex forests, except in times of scarcity, when they were to be obtained elsewhere.

The Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds is peculiarly associated with the forest, because of the great interest afforded by the wonderful little church of Greenstead, where the body of the murdered Edmund lay, and also by the connection of Stapleford Abbots with the same saintly corpse, as is recorded elsewhere. Stapleford Abbots remaining in the forest until the disafforestation in 1851.

A famous abbey in the ancient forest was the Abbey of St. John's, Colchester, whose abbot wore the mitre and attended Parliament. The Lord

Abbot of St. John's Abbey was impleaded against at one of the forest courts for encroaching upon the common land of the forest round the ancient and historic borough. He was charged with appropriating a piece of land adjoining his abbey, and building upon it a tower, presumably for the defence of his monastery. Antiquarians are of opinion that the tower referred to is the present abbey gate, which alone of all the monastic buildings is the sole remnant of that great house. The style of architecture employed—the Gothic arch and groining and decorated foliage of the perpendicular period—tallies with the date of the presentment, namely, the early part of the fifteenth century. The tower or entrance gate is faced with flint and does not appear aggressive, though its position on the summit of a grassy mound is imposing, and strengthens the belief that it is the tower referred to in the report.

On the forest commonable land, without the gate, the abbots were licensed to hold an annual fair. Certain turbulent spirits amongst the abbot's men, on one occasion, issued from the gateway, and provoked a quarrel with the salesmen. The chronicler states that "the men of the abbey assaulted, wounded, and maltreated the townsmen, and robbed them of their goods and chattels in the fair." Their conduct is the more inexplicable since the fair was held for their especial benefit,

to provide additional revenue for the abbey. The truth of this afterwards dawned upon their minds, for they planned a ruse whereby the blame should rest with the burghers. It so happened that a man had been hanged on the abbot's gallows the previous Sunday. His corpse was taken down and secretly placed upon the green as though he had met his death in the recent scuffle. A complaint was then lodged with the coroner, who, with the bailiff, came to view the body, and naturally quickly discovered the simple trick laid for their deception.

The spectacle of a fugitive criminal or offender against the forest laws appealing for protection before the abbey gate was sometimes witnessed, for the Abbey of St. John's, Colchester, was granted the right of sanctuary by Richard the First.

Sanctuary must frequently have been sought in the churches within or around the forest area, for in Danish and early Norman times an offence against the king's deer was punished with death or mutilation. Canute's laws prescribed death—the life of the serf for the life of the royal beast. The Conqueror inflicted the loss of the eyes, hands, or feet, according to the nature of the offence.

The ancient parish churches at Copford, South Benfleet, and Hadstock had until recently human skin attached to the door. The tradition in all three places is in the main the same. A Dane for

an act of sacrilege was flayed alive, and his skin nailed to the church door as a witness to his crime and a warning to others. Curio-hunters have despoiled the doors of their human parchment, and only at the church of Copford—and there in the vestry—is any preserved. Regarded in the light of the ancient forest laws, the traditional act of sacrilege is possibly at fault. The nature of the offence might equally well have been a crime against the royal beasts of the forest. In those stern days, when Essex was part of the Danelagh, the stringent Danish law forbade the serf to hunt on peril of his skin. The penalty was stated in the precise terms: "He shall pay with his hide," and payment was made in the ratio of the estimated damage. Scourging followed the chasing of a deer, so that the hunted animal was forced "to lyll out the tong." A severer scourging or flaying was inflicted for wounding any beast, but particularly a "Roiall beast," or allowing it to be bitten by "a greedy rauening dogg," and death followed if the deer were killed.

The church was the culprit's sanctuary, even against the lighter punishment. The law proclaimed: "If any one put his hide in peril and flee to a church, be the scourging forgiven him." Near Copford Church is a field which has always been known as Danes-field. The local tradition states that here the robber of the church valuables was

captured; suggesting that the Dane had fled thus far when his pursuers overtook him. Given that the man was an offender against the forest laws and not against the sanctity of the church, the scene is thus reconstructed. Doomed by forest law "to lose his skinne," the serf fled, not from, but towards the church for sanctuary. The keepers effected his capture in a cleared space of the forest, probably shot him to prevent his reaching the church, and his body, after being flayed, was buried beneath the forest soil, and gave the name Danes Field to the spot.

Copford Church, a few miles from Colchester, offers further attractions besides fragments of human skin. Its archæological interest is very great. Its origin is not certain, though its construction—as seen in the interior, with the plentiful Roman material employed, suggests an ancient heathen temple. The mural decorations, brought to light of late years, are unique and elaborate. The manor-house adjoining the churchyard shares the interest created by the church, for it was the property of the London prelates, and became a favourite abode of Bishop Bonner. Upon this fact is based the theory that Bonner's corpse, hated and despised, was borne from London to this remote and peaceful spot for burial. A coffin bearing the bishop's initials was indeed interred in the chancel of this most interesting of churches.

The convents which were established within and around the forest area enjoyed forestal privileges

COPFORD CHURCH, NEAR COLCHESTER.

in proportion to their rank, or the favour and piety of the ruling monarch. The cases of three outlying monasteries will serve to explain their status.

The Abbot of Coggeshall was licensed by Henry III. to enclose four woods as a special mark of royal favour. The Prior of Tiptree was permitted to enclose sixty acres of the surrounding forest, a wide heath, belonging to the crown, much of which is to-day open or common land. The Prior of Leigh was less favoured, but does not appear to have been inconvenienced thereby. He hunted in the neighbouring forest of Felstead, though he had no licence of free warren, and in addition, he boldly enclosed a wood, which diversions from the path of privilege kept his name prominently before the forest courts.

Of the twenty-two convents in Essex, but three were nunneries. Two of these quickly passed out of forest history. The establishment at Wix in the disafforested hundred of Tendring was unimportant; that at Hedingham, a foundation of the De Veres near their baronial castle, was also placed beyond the forest in the reign of King John. The third house was the all-important Abbey of Barking, whose abbesses were queens and princesses, and ladies of the noblest families. The Abbess of Barking ranked as a baroness in right of her immense possessions, and though the feudal tenure of knight-service obliged her to supply her quota of men, her sex exempted her from personal attendance in war. The forestal privileges enjoyed by the Abbess in common with the rulers of the monasteries are set forth in the instructions which

Henry the Third issued to De Montefichet, his Chief Forester or Steward, who was ordered " to allow the Abbess of Barking her reasonable estovers in her wood at Hainault for her firing, her cooking, and her brewing, if she has been accustomed so to do in the time of our Lord King John our father. Also to permit the said abbess to have her dogs to chase hares and foxes within the bailiwick if she was accustomed to have them in the time of our aforesaid father."

The anxiety of the abbess's steward to maintain order in her woods caused that official on one occasion to overstep his powers. In the early part of the reign of Edward the First, Alexander Not of Havering—the name " Not " is a very ancient one —was brought before a jury at the forest court by order of the steward, Richard de Burnstede. The charge was that Not had entered the abbess's wood of Hainault during the night and felled an oak worth in the coinage of the time five shillings. Facts, however, were entirely against De Burnstede's statement. The jury found that Not had entered the wood in the daytime, and the oak in question was worth but two shillings, which they ordered should be paid. They then expressed their disapproval of the steward's exaggeration, and fined him half-a-mark for making false statements in court. Whereupon Not, finding himself in the hands of a friendly-disposed jury, brought a counter-

charge against the steward, complaining of the violence used at his arrest, and his three-days' detention in a prison. The jury found that De Burnstede was not a sworn officer of the forest, but a servant of the abbess, whose zeal had outrun his discretion, and because he had exceeded his duty, he was ordered to compensate Not for the injury.

Some years after, the abbess complained that "to her no small loss and grievance" the regarders of the forest imposed certain restrictions upon her woods, and prevented her own ministers and servants from keeping the woods as before, persisting in making a regard over land which she claimed she held "without the regard." It was found that her complaint was just. The woods in question, certain groves in Barking, Tolesbury, and other manors were open to the surrounding forest, but were not part of the forest; for though afforested by Henry the First, they had been restored to the abbey by Stephen. The king's foresters had the custody of the deer within the woods, and the right to enter them at will, but the regarders were ordered to recognise these estates as abbey land exempt from their visitations.

The Abbess of Barking owned both marsh and woodland for many miles around her convent, and certain of her tenants held their land under very peculiar, and in many cases vexatious, tenures. Fines were imposed if a tenant sold his ox without

the abbess's sanction, or permitted his daughter to marry beyond the limits of the manor. The men dwelling in the manor of Clayhall were required to guard the high altar of the abbey church throughout the night and until nine o'clock in the morning annually on the vigil of the Feast of St. Ethelburga, "Our Ladye of Barkinge," the first abbess. The condition imposed upon one tenant was to keep a horse and man in readiness to attend the abbess anywhere within the four seas, while another was called upon once a year to go on foot wherever the business of the abbey might take him, and provide for himself on the way. Another held his land on condition that a full measure of nuts called a pybot —a quarter of a bushel—was supplied yearly, an apparently easy condition then, but an extremely difficult one for any tenant to fulfil at the present day.

At Barking, as at Waltham, occasional disputes arose between the ruler of the abbey and the parishioners. The ancient fishing village of Barking clustered near the abbey buildings, and the ringing of a certain bell greatly annoyed the villagers. They complained that the bell was "both crasid and fectief," and offended their sense of hearing. They therefore demanded its removal and offered to present a new bell. "Persons of kunyng" were then instructed by the abbess to examine into the cause of grievance and present a

report. They were unable to endorse the villagers' estimate of the bell, but nevertheless advised the acceptance of their offer. "My Lady Abbess," however, seized the opportunity to reproach the people of Barking for having "grudged greatly" to repair their own parish church, though it was now proved that they had the means, with the result that her homily left matters exactly as they were.

A neighbouring manorial lord—one John Rigby by name—quarrelled with the abbess with more serious results. A conduit conveying water to the abbey lay through his manor, and he made certain demands in consequence, which were not conceded. His spite took a practical form. He caused the pipes to be dug up in several places, thereby completely cutting off the convent's supply of water, to the "right great hurt and unease of the abbess and the nuns." They were then forced to agree to John's terms, which were a yearly rent of twenty-four shillings, or its equivalent in good cloth. Though the conduit was relaid, the abbess felt that the water supply was still unsafe, and therefore a new course was laid to bring water solely through her own grounds from a spring at Newberry, and make her independent of such a splenetic neighbour. The stream running from this spring was that known as Seven Kings Water, from which the district is named.

The beautiful beech wood at Loughton, known as Monk Wood, with its peculiar legend of the monk and the girl, became the joint property of the abbeys of Stratford and Waltham in the thirteenth century; not in this case by royal grant, but by the gift of three gentlemen who were joint owners of its fifty-six and a half acres. One of these, Ralph de Assartis, granted his share of three parts to the Cistercian monks of Stratford Langthrone; while Geoffrey de Renitot and Roger FitzAilmer, the joint possessors of the remaining fourth part, granted, for the salvation of their souls, their share to the Benedictine monks of Waltham. By this arrangement Stratford Abbey possessed three parts of the soil, the timber, and the profits of pannage and agistments, to Waltham Abbey's one part, which caused a certain amount of friction between the two houses, until it was agreed that the bailiffs of both convents should meet whenever timber was felled, and out of every four trees the bailiff of Stratford should first choose two, not three, thereby giving the bailiff of Waltham a choice between the two remaining trees.

The felling of timber and underwood, and the cutting of heath and furze, was a valuable addition to the sporting rights of clerical and monastic bodies, and could be exercised all the year, the fence month only excepted, because of the fawning of the does. The sanctity of the fence month was

violated by ecclesiastics as well as other persons, a certain Canon of St. Paul's, one John de Lucca,

MONK WOOD, LOUGHTON.

being proved an offender and accordingly fined. The religious orders were required to keep the woods granted to them in good order and well enclosed; otherwise if the woodward reported neglect, the wood was frequently seized by the king—the fate of the Bishop of Ely's wood at Harlow. Oak trees were frequently granted to religious establishments for repairs or for firewood, the following cases being typical of such grants:—

The Abbey of Waltham had a gift of two hundred pounds' worth of timber from Edward the Third. Three hundred trees from Hainault Forest were gifted to the Abbess of Barking for repairs to the church, the abbey buildings, and the manor house. Rose Sculiz, a nun of Barking, is specially mentioned as receiving an oak to repair her chamber. The brethren of the Leper Hospital at Ilford were granted oaks for repairs, and three dry trunks of oak for their fires. St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, received by order of Henry the Third the right to claim oak trees from the Forest of Essex. Twelve oaks from Havering were once sent as a gift to the prioress and sisters of Stratford-atte-Bowe; while three strong oaks taken from the Walley-wode—the Wallwood on the edge of the existing forest at Leytonstone—were granted to the parish church of Low Leyton. Wood was also distributed as alms to widows, whose husbands probably had enjoyed the right of lopping trees. The custom

provided that "every poor widow in Hainault and Dagenham, within the forest, not receiving parochial relief, and whose husband had been dead for one year, should have one load of wood yearly on Easter Monday," and further provided that those unable to cart their wood from the forest should be compensated with eight shillings.

In the *Colloquies of Aelfric*, the huntsman is questioned: "Hast thou hunted to-day?" His reply is: "I have not, because it is Sunday," implying that the restraint of pleasure on the Sabbath arose from a pious regard of the day. From very early times, however, hunting on Sundays was freely indulged in. Richard the Second prohibited hunting on Sundays and Feast days. He announced that it was known that certain persons hunted in the woods and warrens, while "good Christians are at church hearing divine service," the result of which unchristian practice was the very great destruction of his game; but the main point was that, under cover of hunting, facilities were afforded in the forest for the holding of secret meetings, "assemblies, conferences, and conspiracies to rise and disobey their allegiance." Long before Richard's day, however, the forest laws forbade persons who dwelt in the purlieus of the forest to hunt on the Sunday. The law was, in all centuries, honoured as much in the breach as in the observance for frequent cases of sabbatical indulgence

were reported by the keepers. In the fourteenth century, a presentment was made against several men who had killed "one redd deer, being a herst upon the xxiiij of June, being Sonday, in the mornynge about xi of the clocke, in the same mornynge in the service tyme at Weild side plain, being purliews belongynge to the fforest of Waltham," near the ancient town of Ongar. Other offenders waited till after service time, when church-goers were safely at home in their beds, and shades of evening had fallen upon the forest of Wintre—a wood now forming the lower forest beyond the town of Epping. Fully provided with bows and arrows, nets and mastiffs, they hunted and snared the whole night through, and conveyed the venison to the house of one John de Tracy, who was accused of receiving it.

Sabbath offenders included all classes and conditions. Thus a knight—Sir Thomas Arden—with some gentlemen of Loughton, and Reginald the porter at Waltham Abbey, were found guilty of hunting in the forest on a Sunday in the fifth year of Edward the First's reign. They obtained five deer, and Master Reginald received some at the abbey, unknown—so it was averred—to the abbot and convent, who pleaded their ignorance of the transaction. The powerful influence of the abbot is, however, apparent in the dilatory manner in which the course of justice was permitted to over-

take the offenders. The court was not held for nearly twenty years after the event, when some of the offenders were dead, and Reginald—no longer the porter at Waltham, was attached to a priory in Berkshire. He attended the forest court, and received the light sentence of a fine of one mark; while Sir Thomas of Loughton was "pardoned for the king's soul because he was poor."

Thomas de Haselyntine, the Rector of Theydon Bois, was no doubt a good type of the fourteenth-century sporting parson. His rectory abutted on the forest, and is mentioned as a boundary in the perambulation of 1301. He not only took due advantage of such a splendid opportunity to indulge in sport, but extended, by invitation, the privilege to others, and he and Richard, the chaplain of St. Paul's, who had been staying with him, were fined for their activity amongst the king's deer.

Chingford Old Church is a picturesque ruin standing upon the "Mount," from which the eye travels over the flat meads bordering the Lea, and ends in the smoke of factories which encircle London.

A curiously interesting custom lingered for some time at Chingford, and was no doubt the survival of many a similar practice. An estate was held under the rectors of Chingford by the following quaint tenure, described thus by Morant: "Upon every alienation the owner of the estate with his wife,

man and maidservant, each single upon a horse come to the parsonage, where the owner does his homage and pays his relief in the following manner: He blows three blasts with his horn and carries a hawk on his wrist. His servant has a greyhound in

CHINGFORD OLD CHURCH (roof now fallen in).

a slip, both for the use of the rector that day. He receives a chicken for his hawk, a peck of oats for his horse, and a loaf of bread for his greyhound. They all dine; after which the master blows three blasts with his horn, and so they depart."

When, as Tennyson wrote, "*Bluff Harry broke into the spence and turned the cowls adrift*," the monks' connection with the forest ceased for all

time. Their hunting cries no longer echoed through their favourite groves, for the sylvan scenes knew them no more. Venison became a memory, and the chase a dream. Their horses carried other huntsmen, and their dogs chased for other masters. Their beautiful homes were left to fall into decay and ruin, or were "unroofed by selfish rage."

Here and there an arch, a doorway, or a piece of broken wall, and in a few cases a chapel or other buildings, remain to speak eloquently of the past.

All that remains of Barking Abbey is a small rectangular gateway, the entrance to the present churchyard. Above the archway is a small chapel, over which hung the bell used for tolling the "curfew" and ringing for service, and was the subject of the dispute already recorded. Needless to say—

"The bell has ceased to toll,"

for no trace of it is seen, and its fate is unknown.

Of Stratford Abbey nothing now remains. The name, West Ham Abbey, applied to the district, and the road named Abbey Lane, with an old Abbey Mill, is all that exists to remind the visitor that this was once holy ground. Lysons records a find of a small onyx seal set in silver, with the impress of an animal of the genus griffen, which bore the motto in Latin, "I announce to you joy and safety"—the private seal probably of one of the abbots. *Apropos* of finds, a very curious medal

was discovered at Eastbury House, Barking. On the obverse was portrayed a pope, which inverted became a representation of Satan. The reverse depicted the features and cap of a jester, which formed, on being turned, the head of a cardinal. A motto ran round the whole, which translated reads: "A perverted church holds the face of the devil, and fools are sometimes wise."

> "The owl of evening and the woodland fox
> For their abode the shrines of Waltham choose,"

wrote Wordsworth, when the once famous abbey lay in ruinous heaps. But the nave of the old abbey church was happily preserved. Though only a remnant, it yet forms a priceless heritage, and confers upon Essex the proud distinction of possessing, writes Fuller, "the earliest undoubted specimen of the Norman style of architecture existing in England."

No longer does the chant of monks fall sweetly within the ancient minster; no longer is the sound of convent bell borne in upon the forest aisles; but to matins, primes, and hours go the feathered choristers of the woods in Nature's cathedral.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FOREST MARSH-LAND AND THE PASTURE RIGHTS

> Therefore the winds piping to us in vain
> As in revenge, have sucked up from the sea
> Contagious fogs; which falling on the land
> Have every pelting river made so proud
> That they have overbourne their continents.

To the quarrels of the King and Queen of Fairyland, Shakespeare in his *Midsummer Night's Dream* attributed the origin of fogs and floods with their attendant evils.

Floods and inundations have been frequent visitors to the south and west portions of the ancient forest of Essex, the result of the overflowing of the Thames, and its tributaries the Lea,

Roding, Bourne Brook, Chelmer, and other small streams, which, blocked by the dams of the industrious beaver—resident in the primeval forest—flooded the flat tracts of marsh-land, which lay on either side of their banks.

Though the beaver has departed, and though the Thames has, after huge efforts, been satisfactorily embanked, its tributary streams retain the troublesome habit of enlarging themselves after heavy rains over the neighbouring country, converting into a swamp the district through which they flow.

The farmer who gazes with rueful countenance on swamped meadows and devastated crops thinks neither of beavers nor of fairies as remote causes, but should he know of the fairy queen's argument, he would most assuredly agree with her as to the result of such visitations.

The low marshes east of the city of London have acquired for the county of Essex an unenviable reputation. The fable that the whole county is flat, fertile in rheums and agues, is still held by travellers who see, from the deck of a steamer or the seat of a train, those portions only of Essex which border the Thames and the Lea, though a perusal of the works of such writers as Camden, Norden, Drayton, and De Foe among many others would have awakened a wider interest, while a journey of but a few miles inland would have

sufficed to satisfy the most critical eye that Essex was a much maligned county.

The marsh-land, flat and uninteresting to the casual observer, is yet a storehouse of archæological treasure. It holds within its depths the very earliest history of the country; proving Essex, with East Anglia generally, to have been the latest part of the country to rise from the sea after the submersion of the Eocene period.

The geological formation of the district tells of the fact that, when the river systems cut their way out of the layers of gravel and clay of the Pre-Glacial Age, their channels were considerably wider than now and flowed at a higher level. Sewardstone, below High Beach, twelve miles from London, is considered by some to have been anciently the Seaward-stone, indicating the spot where the tide from the sea turned, but it is more probably named from a Saxon by name Syward; indeed, the gentlemen who perambulated the forest bounds in the year 1641 called the place in their report, Syward-Stonelord. Though it is true that the sea deposited the pebble gravel which rests upon the summit of High Beach over a thick stratum of London clay—which here rises in an imposing hillock above Sewardstone—that fact does not support the theory of tides washing the base of High Beach; though it explains the origin of the name "Beach," which so many people confound

with " beech," believing that the beech trees which clothe the slopes of the hill gave the name to the place.

Wherever the surface of the marsh-land has been penetrated, the bones of various mammalia of great size and antiquity have been unearthed. The researches of the antiquarian at various places, notably at Ilford, Walthamstow, and Grays, where excavations for brickfields, waterworks, or cement works have been made, prove that the denizens of the primeval forest were the mammoth elephant similar to the species found in Siberia, the rhinoceros, the great ox, the wild horse, the giant deer, the reindeer, elk, and antelope, the red and roe deer, the lion and the bear, hyena and wolf, foxes and hares in great numbers, the wild boar and the beaver.

At Grays an ancient forest has been brought to light. The wood consists almost entirely of yew-trees, mixed with an undergrowth, chiefly hazel, the nuts of which are marked by the squirrels. At various places along the Thames, yew and hazel have been discovered at a depth of three to four feet, but the regular method in which they lie testifies to the fact that they were placed there centuries ago for the purpose of embanking the stream.

Vast herds of wild boar roamed the marshes in ages gone by, as the abundant remains of that

animal excavated at Walthamstow sufficiently prove. The district was well suited to the requirements of the boar. He could either feed upon the quantities of beech mast and acorns liberally supplied in the neighbouring woods, or wallow in lazy enjoyment in the muddy pools of the marshes.

From Doomsday Book can be gathered the number of hogs which each manor was capable of feeding. The Saxon was partial to his swine, but in later times swine as commonable beasts were not encouraged. They continued to be kept by forest dwellers, and were turned into the forest glades at Michaelmas, but were required to be "rung." Unringed swine were impounded, because of the damage which could be wrought by them, and fines were imposed upon offending owners. Certain citizens of London had anciently the right to depasture hogs in the Essex woods, and two citizens, John Potter and George Bennett, by the service of providing each year a leash for the king's greyhounds, had the right of pannage for six hogs in the woods round Havering.

The last wild boar in Essex was killed in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and fell to the spear of the Earl of Essex in the neighbourhood of Earl's Colne.

Essex, once a part of the ancient Danelagh, retains many names as mementoes of the Danish

occupancy. The south-west district bordering the suburbs of London is particularly full of them. The Lea is the Danish mead-stream; Leyton, the town in the mead, as is also Barking from a different root, the meadow town; though Morant derives the name from Beorc-ing—the meadow with birch trees. Stratford is the Streta, or mead-ford, Romford, the Rom or Danish marsh-ford, not an abridged form of Roman-ford, though such it was.

The Ingerburn is either the stream of Hingwar or a mead bank. Rainham is the clean place and Lambourne the muddy stream; while the floods that were caused by the Lea and the Roding are responsible—writes Mr. Norris in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1888—for "the distinctly Danish appellation of 'holm' in East and West Ham, which in winter and at flood tides still bear out the appropriateness of their early designation."

The same authority advances an explanation of the word Hainault, given to a part of the forest. The name, he says, "which has been so wonderfully puzzling to local historians and others, proclaims the Danish "hegn" of which the Saxon equivalent is "hedge." Another attempt to solve the problem gives Hean-holt—the place of little value—while the popular traditions are that the forest here was named Hainault either in honour of

Philippa, the daughter of the Count of Hainault, who became the queen of Edward the Third, or because from Hainault were brought the deer which stocked that part of the forest.

Gunnars Grove, Knotts Green, and Snaresbrook recall memories of Danes of these names. The latter place is situated at the junction of the present day Leyton Flats and the woodland at Wanstead—the white or Wodin's place, or a woodman's clearing—and is the brook of Snar or Snorre, the swift. "The family of Snarry," writes Mr. Norris, "bear in their coat of arms a snail, obviously from the idea that that was the significance of his—Snar's—patronymic." "Shade of the first Snorre!" he exclaims, "what a contrast between the snor or snorre the nimble-footed and a snail!"

Travellers in the olden time had good cause for a grumble at the dangers of the marsh-land. The great number of place-names which end in "ford" indicate the frequency with which streams had to be crossed. At Old Ford and Stratford the London roads crossed the Lea into Essex. Chingford was the king's ford across the king's river into the forest. Woodford, as its name implies, was among the woods, the fording-place of the river Rhoden—now Roding—which at Ilford, a few miles lower down, was crossed by the old Roman road which ran on to Romford over the Bourne and to Chelmsford over the Chelmer.

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There was a delightful uncertainty in safely negotiating the fords when the rivers were in flood, and hair-breadth escapes from drowning were frequent, and lives were sometimes lost. When Erkenwald, Bishop of London, died at Barking in 685, the right of interment by his sister, the Abbess of Barking, was disputed by the clergy of London, and also by the monks of Chertsey, whose founder and abbot Erkenwald was. The Londoners won, and triumphantly bore away the saintly body of their fourth prelate for burial in St. Paul's. Their progress was stayed at the ford of the Roding. The passage was so dangerous that it was only accomplished by the aid of one of those miraculous intercessions common to the early history of the church. A chanted litany appeased the troubled waters, and the body was duly enshrined within the cathedral. The dangerous ford, the ill-ford, became noted, and the name Ilford remains.

But the age of miracles passed. The presence of a Norman queen on a devout pilgrimage to the shrines of the saints failed to act as a charm upon the troubled waters at Old Ford, and the building of Bow Bridge and the Channelsea Bridge was the outcome.

Recognising the importance of keeping the bridges in good repair, Queen Matilda generously granted the Abbess of Barking some land and a mill in return for the "repayringe of the bridges

and the highwaie," which was hardened by constant dressings of gravel. The Abbot of Stratford afterwards acquired the land and mill, and with them the responsibility for repairs to the highway and bridges, a burden he promptly laid upon one Godfrey Pratt—whose family became hereditary keepers of the bridges—the remuneration being "certain loaves of bread" daily.

Travellers were so satisfied with Godfrey's performance of his duties that they gave gifts to him. When the abbot became aware of this practice, he meanly deducted a part of the allowance. Godfrey, to counterbalance the deficiency, demanded a toll from all wayfarers. The never-ending war of disputes eventually crushed the worthy Godfrey, and finally accepting defeat, he ceased repairs as the most effectual retaliation against both abbot and travellers. Repairs were made in King John's reign by Hugh Pratt, and his son, William Pratt, was empowered by Robert Passlow, the king's justice of the forests, to demand a bridge toll of one penny for every cart carrying ordinary merchandise, twopence for one carrying tasel, and eightpence for a cart conveying the body of a dead Jew.

By an inquiry into the condition of the forest in 1630 it was reported that Bow Bridge was then in a ruinous condition, owing to the neglect of the then tenant of the Wiggen Mill and lands, whose tenure

obliged him to repair the bridge, and a distraint was ordered to be made by the sheriff upon his

THE LEA AT CHINGFORD.

lands, to bring him to a sense of his responsibility. The stone bridge has but lately been replaced by

an iron structure to meet the demands of heavy traffic.

The Pratts appear to have had charge of other bridges over the Lea, for connecting Walthamstow to Hackney was Locke Bridge, which William Pratt barricaded with an iron railing, an obstruction the imperious Abbot of Waltham on his way to London had removed. When the forty gentlemen perambulated the forest in 1641, Locke Bridge was in ruins, and they found that "for passage is used Trajetus"—a ferry. Eleven years previously it was reported at the forest courts that the bridge "was cleane decayed and broken down," and a strong complaint lodged that "one Clement Serbye doth exercise a Ferrye there and will not pass over any poore passengers be they never soe many in number unless they will paye to him a half-penny a piece both for goeing and comeing. And will not carry horses over, unless the owners thereof will give to him such prices as hee will demand although the water be never so dangerous to passe over."

Farther up the Lea at Waltham was another forest bridge called High Bridge. Queen Elizabeth ordered that "Hye Bridge" should be rendered capable of permitting the royal barge to pass under, and gave twenty pounds to carry out the work. It is difficult to picture state barges ascending the Lea at the present day, but it is certain that from the

royal palace at Greenwich the royal barge must often have steered its course into the two forest streams, the Lea and Roding, for a visit to either Waltham or Barking.

The famous Abbey of Barking, earliest of Saxon nunneries, and the equally famous Abbey of Waltham, oldest of Norman structures, were both situated in the marsh-land. Near Bow Bridge was the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne, which was established with some difficulty, for, situated close to the river Lea, the pious monks had once the exciting but wholly unpleasant experience of a flooded monastery. The abbey's misfortune, as given by Leland, reads: "This house first sett amonge the lowe marsches was after with sore fludes defacyd and remevid to a celle or graunge longinge to it caullyd Burgestide in Estsex—a mile or more from Billerica." Here the monks remained until Richard II. repaired their abbey, and "brought the foresayde monks agayne to Stratefforde, where amonge the marsches they reinhabytyd."

The flood referred to was no doubt the severe inundation which occurred in the last year of Edward the Third's reign, 1377, when the Thames and its tributaries combined to place the marshes completely under water. Barking Abbey, built upon a slight elevation, thereby escaped, but the damage around was so extensive that the abbess

and convent expended in repairs no less a sum than two thousand pounds—a very great amount in those days. The abbess's expenses were so heavy that she was prevented from contributing towards the war fund, and her petition for exemption from payment was readily granted by the king.

The flooding was always largely caused by the obstructions which accumulated through neglect in the channels of the forest streams. Whenever, therefore, an excess of water was brought through the forest from the uplands, the drowning of the low marshes was the inevitable consequence. In the fourteenth century the Bourne Brook was allowed to become so obstructed that the marshes of Havering were completely drowned, and the parish church of Romford was thereby rendered unsafe, so that in 1407 it was pulled down and a more substantial one built farther away from the stream. In the reigns of Mary and of Elizabeth royal aid was on more than one occasion solicited, for from the palace of Havering-atte-Bower a view of the flooded marshes could be obtained.

The reclaiming and draining of the marshes and the embanking of the rivers to prevent as far as was possible future inroads was largely the work of the monks. For the neighbourhood, not altogether easy of access, coupled with its loneliness and solitude, became the home of several monastic establishments. The marshes when drained pro-

vided valuable pasturage for cattle, and large flocks of sheep belonging to the monasteries were depastured by royal grant upon the low forest land. A flock of sheep, eight hundred strong, the property of the Abbey of Stratford, pastured between West Ham and Walthamstow in much the same manner as sheep roam the Lammas lands of Low Leyton at the present day.

The dissolution of the monasteries suddenly released large tracts of forest commonable land formerly held by the religious establishments, and the commoners were not slow to take advantage of the circumstance. Wool was in great demand, and sheep grazing was far more profitable than tilling the soil. Forest land, therefore, became greatly overstocked with sheep, contrary to the forest laws, which at that period were somewhat slackly administered. The young Edward the Sixth announced his intention to punish offenders who, not content with surcharging the pasture and robbing the deer of their food, "do murdre and kyll a nombre of the seid deere not a lyttle to our dyspleasure."

The sheep, as a forest commonable beast, was looked upon with some distrust. It was asserted that, compared with cattle, sheep were harmful to the deer, for pasture used by sheep became "rank" and unfit for the king's beasts. On the other hand, it was argued that, being peaceful, sheep quieted

the fears of the deer. Henry Fuller of Chigwell, when summoned in 1628 to answer for harming the deer by depasturing sheep among them, boldly contended that experience proved the direct contrary. "It is an usuall thing," he maintained, "to see a deere and a sheepe feed together in one quillet of ground," and what was somewhat extraordinary, "even upon one molehill." The forest justices thought otherwise, and Fuller was made an example of, being fined thirteen pounds six shillings and eightpence for his twenty sheep.

Certain favoured ones among the citizens of London held common of pasture in the forest for a limited number of sheep, and in the fifteenth century a presentment was made at the forest courts against a London citizen for surcharging the pasture with a greater number of sheep than was allowed him.

The question of surcharging the pasture of the forest having been raised at the Justice Seat of 1630, the forest reeves explained their position. "Wee saye and present, that it hath byn the anycient Custome of the Forrest to bee driven twice a year to avoyde Forrainers' cattle," which cattle were those of non-forest dwellers, or others having no rights of pasturage. The term "foreigners" is still applied in parts of Essex to strangers, especially those from the city. Londoners must not, however, feel aggrieved to find

themselves so classed in districts where their manners and speech stamp them as foreign to the neighbourhood.

That the monastic bodies resident in the marshland created ill-feeling over the question of rights of pasturage on forest commonable land is evidenced from the story which Farmer gives of the serious quarrel between the abbot and the dwellers of Waltham in the reign of Henry the Third.

It appears that the commoners as a protest entered the marsh, which the convent regarded as theirs, and drove out the abbot's mares and colts so violently that four valuable animals were killed. "The abbot was politely pleased" to overlook the matter, but when a year later the villagers demanded the removal of his mares and colts he refused, but promised, if his bailiffs were wrong, to amend the matter, and give them an answer in a week's time. On that day, the Tuesday before Easter, the men and women of Waltham awaited the decision at the abbey gate. The abbot, who had as a visitor the king's brother, Richard, Duke of Cornwall, deferred the matter till he should return from a journey. The irate Walthamites, unrestrained by the temporal greatness of the duke, or the spiritual holiness of the abbot, rushed into the marsh, driving all before them. The abbot's keepers resisted, "even to the shedding of blood," but three animals were drowned and ten others

badly hurt. Before the abbot returned, the commoners had contracted fears of prosecution, and so, on his arrival, they implored "a love day,"

Abbey Gate, Waltham Holy Cross.

at which they promised to compensate the abbot for his losses. The abbot's demands were evidently too severe for them, for they tramped to London in a body to complain to the king that the abbot "would eat them up to the bone." The abbot retaliated by excommunicating the men of Wal-

tham, who brought an action against him for appropriating their common land, but were unsuccessful in their suit, and fined forty marks. They then confessed their fault, and obtained the abbot's pardon. He graciously paid their fine, and withdrew the ban of the church.

But in spite of his success, the abbots were not left in undisturbed possession of the marsh in question. A more systematic contention arose between them and their neighbour, the lord of the manor of Cheshunt. Each new abbot and new manorial lord took up the old quarrel, but without satisfactory results, for when the monks had departed the townsfolk of Waltham and Cheshunt continued to dispute the possession of the marsh.

The root of the trouble lay in the outcome of the strategy of King Alfred, who, as has been already narrated, diverted the course of the river Lea in order to take his troublesome enemy, the Danes, at a disadvantage. The Lea, thereafter, flowed in several channels, and as Fuller, the historian of Waltham said of it, "not only parteth Herts from Essex, but also seven times parteth from itself." Cheshunt, no longer separated from Waltham by the main stream, claimed the land on their side of Waltham, urging that the farther stream of the divided river was the real boundary. Hence the friction between the two places.

In 1601 a jubilant record in the parish registers of Waltham relates how the men of Cheshunt perambulated their supposed bounds and came "to our hye bridge, and for so doing and coming out of their libertye they were for their paynes thrust into a dych." As late as 1823 Cheshunt claimed the disputed marsh, but while "beating the bounds" were met at the marsh gate by the men of Waltham, when broken heads and other injuries bore testimony to the desperate character of the meeting.

The commoners of the Essex forest were readily belligerent, given a sufficient *casus belli*. When, after the somewhat slack administration of the forest laws under the popular sporting Queen Elizabeth, a rigorous return to severities was made by King James, "the country growing jealouse of some further intention of inclosing their comons began to mutyne," as Sir Fulke Grevyll wrote to Mr Secretary Lake. He continues that, not knowing to what extent certain proceedings at Theobalds—the king's seat at Enfield Chase—might be interrupted, he and Lord Denny of Waltham decided to postpone action. "Yet within some fewe daies after, Tresswell going to Theobalds for perfecting the surveyes of his Ma^ties farms now to be enclosed, what a showre of Shrewes he encountred with, I leave to the storie of his own letters. Wherein ye may see easilie this tight sea of busie people is

raysed up with every wynde, so as a tender proceeding with them can be no preiudice."

Commonable cattle were "horse-beasts" and "neat-beasts," which latter included bullocks, oxen, cows, and calves. They could either roam the entire forest or remain stationary; "couchant or levant" being the somewhat heraldic phraseology employed in the rule.

Sheep and swine, asses, goats, and geese were not regarded favourably. Goats fed in the forest in the olden times, and Havering had its goats' wood. The name Havering is believed by some to have been derived from Haefer-ing, that is, the goats' meadow, and to this explanation the name of the local Gidea Hall lends assistance; Gidea or Giddy, anciently Geddesduna, indicating the Goats' hill.

Geese, as well as goats, spoiled the pasture for the deer, and desperate measures to abate the nuisance were taken by the forest court of 1719, which ordered that "Ye Beadle of the Forest give notice to ye poor people adjoining to ye Forest to keep their geese near to their houses and not let them ramble upon ye Forest, otherwise shoot them."

The Bishops of London were granted by King John special facilities for the depasturing of their cattle in the forests of Essex. The right of pasturage was not extended to non-forest dwellers except

by special licence; and where the forest boundary divided a parish, only those persons living within the limits could claim pasturage, and they were entitled to depasture either one horse or two cows for every four pounds of rent. To depasture strangers' cattle was a serious offence, and the offender lost his right for the next three years.

All commonable beasts were required to be branded not only with the owner's mark, but with the forest brand, and a fee of threepence per head of cattle was paid to the reeve for this duty. Notice of the marking days, originally held four times a year, but latterly but twice, was given at the parish church of each forest district, on the Sunday preceding Old Lady Day and the eighteenth day of July. Unmarked cattle were impounded until a fine of three shillings and fourpence had been paid by the offending owners, though occasionally commoners prevented the reeve from performing his duty, and would use force to prevent their beasts from being either branded or impounded.

Commoners' cattle were ordered to be withdrawn during the fence month, the fifteen days before and after Old Midsummer Day, when the forest was sacred to the deer and their newly born fawns. Trespassing cattle in that month were impounded, and the forest courts in the year 1760 had to deal with certain offenders of Nazeing whose cattle were

so impounded, and who added to their offence by pressing the local constable into their service and forcibly rescuing from the village pound "21 horned beasts of the Cow Kind."

In the marshes of Waltham cows were not permitted to remain out at night, but were to be driven home at the driving hour from Old Lady Day to Old Lammas Day and not turned upon the marsh again before four o'clock in the morning. Persons who deliberately turned out their cattle at the driving hour, thereby increasing the difficult task of the marshards, paid to the marshwardens sixpence per head of cattle for the extra trouble caused.

The distinguishing mark of the various forest vills at first sight appears to be a quaint representation of embattled architecture, but which, on closer inspection, proves to be a letter of the alphabet surmounted by a crown. The alphabetical letter was not the initial of the village name, for since no less than five forest vills commenced with the letter W., two with C., two others with L., and two again with N., some distinction became necessary. The difficulty was overcome by arranging the villages according to the alphabet. Commencing at Waltham, as the most important forest vill, with A.—though the mark appears as an inverted W.—thence passing northwards to Nazeing with B., to Roydon with C., an alphabetical sequence appears

intended but was not strictly maintained, for Epping—the only place which retained its initial on the marking iron—came out of order with E., and Theydon Bois, which followed, was given D.; Loughton continued in order with F.; Chingford's mark appears like C. but was G.; Chigwell's, a peculiar letter H.; Lambourne followed with I.; Barking with a most erratic letter K., and Dagenham was given L. A sudden break in the order placed M. in the centre at Woodford. Leyton and Walthamstow followed with N. and O. respectively; while P. was given to the outlying Navestock beyond Lambourne; after which unaccountable break the order was again followed at Wanstead with Q., and Ilford with R. The mark of East Ham, West Ham, Stapleford, and Sewardstone is uncertain, for the original irons were lost, and the distinguishing letter forgotten. West Ham afterwards substituted W.H.

When the highway leading from Bow Bridge to Romford was declared by the perambulation of 1301 to be the southern boundary of the forest in place of the river Thames, the marsh-land lying between it and the river was disafforested, and the dwellers in that district no longer had rights of pasturage over the remaining forest.

Havering, as a "liberty," was separated from the forest proper as early as the reign of Edward the Second, and its commoners lost their right of

intercommonage; yet towards the close of the eighteenth century their cattle were still turned upon the forest land in the neighbouring vill of Dagenham, owing to the connivance of the reeves' man of that parish, who frankly admitted receiving sixpence per head for allowing unmarked cattle to depasture there.

The marshes south of the road were still within the purlieus of the forest, but that fact gave the inhabitants no right of free pasturage on the north and forest side of the road, as was explained in 1594, when several men of Romford, "being menn dwellinge in the purlieus havinge noe interest of Comon within the said fforest had thare cattel gooinge within her highnesse wast of henholt," which cattle accordingly were ordered to be withdrawn and the offending owners presented at the forest courts.

The disafforested wards on the south side of the highway soon obtained an advantage over those still in the forest from the fact that the marshes when cultivated proved to be extremely fertile.

"Potatoes now are Plaistow's pride,"

declared an old rhyming account which praises the splendid productions supplied from the fattening marshes to the London markets.

De Foe, of *Robinson Crusoe* fame, was for a time resident in the marshes of Essex and endeavoured

to succeed as a brickmaker at Tilbury. He writes of the potatoes that were not only the pride of Plaistow, but of many another place, and notes the fine flocks of sheep and herds of cattle that fed on the drained marsh-land, the calves being "the best and fattest and the largest veal in England, if not in the world."

In De Foe's day London sportsmen and others were in the habit of visiting St. Osyth Island for wild duck, teal, and widgeon, and "often came home with an Essex ague on their backs, which they find an heavier load than the fowls they have shot."

The unhealthiness of the low marshes towards the mouth of the Thames was the one drawback to the Essex Utopia as seen by John Norden. The result of continual inundations was, to again quote Queen Titania's argument, that—

> "The moon the governess of floods
> Pale in her anger washes all the air
> That rheumatic diseases do abound,"

and so John found to his cost, for he caught "a most cruell quarterne feuer." Yet, in spite of this, the gallant fellow sticks to his former "Englishe Goshen" opinion, for he pluckily adds, "but the manie and sweete comodeties conteruayle the daunger."

It was not the agues and rheums of the marshes

which astonished De Foe when he travelled the district, but the fact that many of the farmers had "had from five to six to fourteen or fifteen wives." A case was told him of a farmer on Canvey Island who lived with his twenty-fifth, and the man's son, aged thirty-five, had already "had about fourteen." The "about" is delightful, but De Foe afterwards found this report to be somewhat exaggerated, though the other cases were genuine. "A merry fellow," who had enjoyed about a dozen, told the reason.

"They"—the men of the district—"being bred in the marshes themselves and seasoned to the place, did pretty well, but that they generally chose to leave their own lassies to their own neighbours out of the marshes and went into the uplands for a wife. That when they took the young women out of the wholesome fresh air, they were clear and healthy, but when they came into the marshes amongst the fogs and damps they presently changed complexion, got an ague or two, and seldom held it above a half year or a year at the most." And then the merry one, with a relish unwarranted by the circumstances, added, "We go to the uplands again and fetch another."

The "Isle of Dogs," at the junction of the Lea with the Thames, "derived its name," writes Strutt, "from being the dépôt of the spaniels and greyhounds of Edward the Third, and this

spot was chosen because it lay contiguous to his sports of woodcock shooting and coursing the red deer in Waltham and the other royal forests of Essex, for the more convenient enjoyment of which he generally resided in the sporting season at Greenwich."

The Rev. John Strype, the antiquarian and venerable rector of Low Leyton from 1669 to 1737, writing of the same circumstances, says that because of the "dogs making a great noise, the seamen and others thereupon called the place the Isle of Dogs."

The district bordering the Thames provided an excellent field for sport other than the woodcock mentioned by Strutt. The heron, the wild duck, teal, snipe, and widgeon, among other birds, inhabited the marshes, and many a royal hawking party must have watched the falcons at their work in this neighbourhood. As the ancient forest land became more and more cultivated and inhabited, the wild birds withdrew farther inland or remained lower down towards the Thames' mouth. The woodcock still visits Epping Forest, but his visits are becoming more rare, and are confined to the winter months, as are those also of many other birds.

Wanstead Park is still a favourite rendezvous for heron and wild duck; the winter visitors, the teal and woodcock, etc., ascending into the forest

at times by way of the river Roding, a curiously quiet and select little stream, considering its near-

THE RIVER RODING AT WOODFORD.

ness to the outskirts of the city. Herons fish from its waters, the kingfisher flashes along its banks, for the valley of the Roding, with its reputation for floods, does not attract the builder. The heronry at Wanstead Park is but six miles from London, and here as many as fifty birds have been counted. The greater number of herons migrate in the summer, but a few are always at Wanstead.

Between Wanstead and Ilford lies Aldersbrook, which was acquired by the Commissioners of Sewers for a cemetery, a small part of the land being retained as a grazing ground for a few cattle. By this fortunate circumstance the corporation of London, as represented by the Commissioners of Sewers, became commoners of the forest, with pasture rights not only over the manor of Aldersbrook, but over the whole of the forest manors, according to immemorial privilege.

When, therefore, the commoners of Epping Forest were prevented from exercising their ancient pasture rights over the forest by the audacious enclosures erected by the lords of manors, the commissioners, as fellow commoners and freeholders of the forest, were enabled to take action by commencing a suit in Chancery against the aggressors, which ultimately resulted in a victory for the corporation.

A century ago, London's retired merchants, or those who could afford both a country house and

a town one, rapidly settled upon the borders of the forest in the south-west corner, and encroached upon it whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself. Those still in business rode or drove the few miles to the city night and morning, others kept their wives and families in the country house, and visited them for the week-end.

When the growth of the city forced certain manufacturers to move farther afield, the marshes bordering the river Lea from Hackney onwards to the Thames were eagerly acquired as sites for the erection of new premises. On the spot where formerly stood in solitude the Abbey of Stratford Langthorne, are now the ceaseless throbbing Titans of modern machinery engaged in the work of disposing of the tons of sewage brought in from the north of London.

Forcibly is felt the poet's lament,—

"Departed is the pious monk,"

and departed with him is all trace of the abbey buildings, swept away by a second "sore flude," the modern ruthless tide of a great city's overflow. Gas, leather, sugar, chemical, manure, and soap works among others now occupy the once peaceful pastures of the monks, and pollute the air with a combination of odours, arising from their respective manufactures—odours which cause temporary discomfort at times to habitual travellers on the Great

Eastern Railway, when their trains are "held up" in the midst of it by adverse signals.

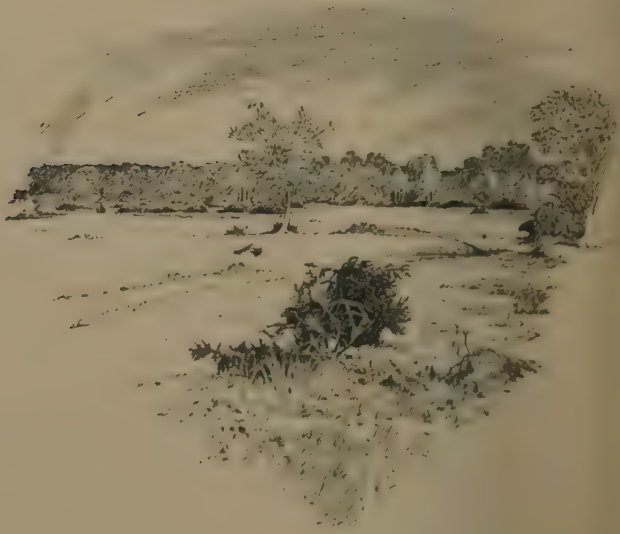
Away across the marshes, from Bow Bridge through Stratford, Leyton, Walthamstow, and Chingford on the one hand, and West Ham, Plaistow, East Ham, Manor Park, Ilford, and beyond towards Romford on the other, municipal and parliamentary boroughs now cover the once solitary marshes, and take the place of small forest villages. East and West Ham have grown at a rate stated to be without parallel in the United Kingdom. Endless row upon row of dwellings, street after street built with painful regularity; house follows house of one uninteresting pattern, with no relief from an overwhelming sameness.

Parks, fields, and wooded lanes have either disappeared or are being rapidly swept away to meet the demand for suburban residences; where, little more than a century ago, the deer could roam, the district now is as non-forestal as it could well be. The growth of Greater London has only been checked in the north-east by the boundary of the forest itself.

Forest Gate, a ward of West Ham, is so named from having once contained one of the gates which gave access to the forest from the highway. Though much of the land to the north of the road has been built upon, Forest Gate can still claim to be the gate of the forest. It leads directly on to

the "Wanstead Flats," which are easily reached from all parts of London by train and tram, and are greatly appreciated by hundreds who go no farther afield.

The "Flats," which stretch from Manor Park to Walthamstow, though uninteresting perhaps from a purely pictorial point of view, yet form a fitting introduction to the beauties of real forest scenery which lie beyond.



CHAPTER IX

THE TREES AND THE DEER—THE LOPPING AND FUEL RIGHTS, AND THE HISTORY OF THE DEER

> Away! our journey lies through dell and dingle,
> Where the blithe fawn trips by its timid mother,
> Where the broad oak with intercepting boughs
> Checkers the sunbeam in the greensward alley.

The popular conception of a forest is a place of trees and deer; if not deer, then of necessity trees. A treeless forest appears a misnomer; and yet the royal forests of early time were such by virtue of the accommodation they afforded for the beasts of the chase; the timber being the legacy of the virgin woodlands and not the result of "forestry."

The extent of forests in a country reflects the progress of the nation. Their history is marked by three great epochs—savage, sporting, and utili-

tarian, corresponding to man's relation to the forest and its denizens—which in England are punctuated by the dates of 1066 and 1688.

In the primeval forest savage man lived in his woodland dwelling, made the giant oak his temple, and slew the wild beasts for both food and sacrifice, and was, even in the eleventh century, well-nigh as savage as the beasts which he hunted and slew. At the Norman Conquest both vert and venison belonged to the kings, and were protected by rigorous laws; hunting was elaborated into the Art de Venerie, and pursued with pageantry and splendour until the fall of the Stuart dynasty, when the picturesqueness and the severity alike of old forestal laws and life was destroyed.

With the era inaugurated by the Revolution the royal forests gradually disappeared, wholly or in part, before the trend of modern requirement, and became nursery grounds for timber, and the holiday haunts of the people. Now the once royal forest of Essex forms the recreation ground of an ever-increasing metropolis; but it has not lost its forestal nature, owing to the careful management of its conservators, the corporation of the city of London, who protect both trees and deer.

Epping Forest can boast no giant oaks such as adorn its past rivals to royal favour—the Forest of Windsor and the New Forest. Its beeches have not earned a far-spread reputation as have the

famed Burnham Beeches — though it contains specimens as fine. Neither have its hornbeams attained a growth equal to those of Hatfield Forest. With the exception of a few woods, its pollarded and dwarfed timber presents a somewhat grotesque appearance, yet one invested with a certain quaint beauty not met with to the same extent elsewhere. Epping Forest is a pollarded forest. Unpollarded trees are few. Indeed, no great effort would be required to count them. In and near the Epping Green Ride majestic limbs of unpollarded beech sweep gracefully to within a few feet from the ground, while the same neighbourhood retains a few hornbeam which the woodman's axe has spared. Otherwise, the gnarled stems and swollen crowns of oak, beech, and hornbeam are the dominant feature of London's forest.

This wonderful little forest — replete with historical and romantic associations—a relic of primeval woodland, is the last survivor of the hornbeam forests of Great Britain. It has a character quite its own, formed from three main influences: its proximity to the capital, its diversity of soil with the difference in past management of its various manors, and the right of tree lopping, formerly vested in the forest inhabitants. It does not, moreover, suffer from a monotonous uniformity. Each district has its own interest, its own character. The green rides and spreading beeches at

Epping differ completely from the densely grown beech woods at Theydon Bois. The open heath and young birches of the high grounds above Loughton give place to the finely situated groves of young beech and hornbeam which clothe the slopes to the Lea valley above Waltham. Pollarded hornbeam, like a fantastic army, surround the beautiful beech groups of Monk Wood; the graceful birches at High Beach contrast pleasantly with the majesty of the beeches in the Victoria Wood close by; while the youthful sturdiness of the oaks at Chingford are a welcome change from the thorn trees which cover the plains around the Connaught Waters. Hornbeam and holly intermingle in the woods from Chingford Hatch to Walthamstow. The Leyton and the Wanstead Flats, with their gorse and broom, emphasise the stateliness of the avenues of limes at Bushwood and the elms of Wanstead Park.

The Essex Forest is a forest under civilisation. Marks of man's handiwork appear on all sides. Yet adverse criticism is outweighed by the strong human interest attaching to its pollarded vegetation. By the right known as the "common of estovers" the inhabitants of the forest villages had for centuries the privilege of cutting wood from the forest by lopping the branches of trees within reach with the axe. The lopping right extended over a period of five months, beginning with the Festival

of All Saints—the eleventh of November—and ending on the Festival of Saint George—the twenty-third of April. Each man was permitted to lop sufficient wood for his own use, but was not to dispose of any, though a man might be hired to lop for those willing to pay him for his labour. The result of such continued lopping is seen throughout the length and breadth of the existing forest in the grotesque contortions of stunted trees which, having had their natural growth pollarded, appear to have writhed beneath the treatment so mercilessly meted out to them. Especially is this the case with the hornbeam, a tree resembling the beech, which grows in profusion, and thrives under any condition of soil, whether damp or dry, whether on open heath or in close thicket, and its habit of quickly putting forth fresh growth made it a favourite with the loppers.

"As is common in ancient forests in the neighbourhood of men's wants," writes Lord Lytton of the Essex woods, in his story of the Saxon Harold, "the trees were dwarfed in height by repeated loppings, and the boughs sprang from the hollow gnarled boles of pollard oaks and beeches; the trunks—vast in girth and covered with mosses and whitening cankerstains or wreaths of ivy—spoke of the most remote antiquity; but the boughs which their lingering and mutilated life put forth were either thin and feeble with innumerable

branchlets or were centred on some solitary distorted limb which the woodman's axe had spared. The trees thus assumed all manner of crooked, deformed, fantastic shapes—all betokening age and all decay—all in spite of the noiseless soli-

Pollarded Hornbeam.

tude around, proclaiming the waste and ravages of man."

There are two beautiful beech-woods lying one to the east, the other to the west of the high ground at High Beach, known as Mount Pleasant. They were, previous to the dissolution of the monasteries, the property of the neighbouring abbeys of Waltham and Stratford, and it is no doubt due to the

fostering care of the monks that the trees have attained to their present grandeur. In these two woods the condition of the beeches testifies to the fact that there, at least, the ancient system of pollarding was at some time discontinued. The natural growth of branch has been allowed full scope for development, though an absence of the sweeping and graceful lateral branches—the characteristic beauty of the beech—will attest the play of the woodman's axe so long as the old trees remain.

It is said that when Gainsborough painted his picture, "The Woodman," in 1787, he sought a model among the men of the Essex woods. He found one to his satisfaction, in a hale and hearty old lopper of Chigwell Row, whose axe had awakened the echoes in the woods of Hainault Forest. "The Woodman and his Dog in a Storm" —to give the picture its full title—was one of Gainsborough's later landscape-and-subject pictures. It was unfortunately burnt, but a print of it shows "how full of poetry it was," writes one of the master's chroniclers, "the woodman's face, calmly uplifted in awe of the god of the storm, contrasting with the abject terror of his dog crouching close to him."

The privilege of lopping was exercised over the manor of Loughton to a larger extent than in any other forest manor, owing to the traditional

graciousness of Queen Elizabeth who, as Lady of the Manor of Loughton, is credited with having vested the right to lop in every householder of Loughton, requiring from them, in place of a charter, the strict fulfilment of the following quaint condition, which appears to have formed the rule over the remaining forest manors also:—that at midnight on the 11th November, and before the 12th was ushered in, the axes were to be driven into the wood, that the lopping might begin between the 11th and 12th days of the month, under pain of forfeiting their privilege.

The men of Loughton met annually on the appointed night at a fixed spot, generally on Staples Hill; and while waiting for midnight to be proclaimed—it is to be presumed by the church clock—passed the time merrily in the consumption of liquor. Then as the clock chimed the hour, the oldest lopper present struck his axe with a resounding blow into the nearest tree. His comrades immediately followed his example, and the silence of the forest was disturbed for the next two hours, by which time each man, by lopping a branch here and there, had marked off by boundaries that portion of woodland wherein he would lop during the ensuing winter, before he returned home to the warmth of his bed.

The due observance of that all-important midnight stroke having been fulfilled, the loppers

entered the wood at their pleasure during the rest of the season, piling their wood in loads, to be drawn from the forest in sleds. In Loughton it was customary to use white horses to draw the first load, and make the occasion one of rejoicing, but no ceremony appears to have attended the close of the lopping season in April, since wood was allowed to remain on the forest till June.

In the year 1642 the men of Waltham lost their right to lop, not only for that year, but apparently for all time, by failing to commence their lopping punctually at midnight in the preceding year. The circumstance of their loss was recorded in an old manuscript book, kept by a family of Waltham of the ancient name of Pigbone. From that account it appears that the loppers, on the opening night of the lopping season, were invited by the lord of the manor to a convivial gathering known to the loppers as "a drunk." They attended, regarding the invitation as an hospitable and withal a friendly one. A merry programme was rehearsed, with the result that twelve o'clock came and went and the revellers were none the wiser. In fact, they had been inebriated too pleasantly to concern themselves about the dark wood without. Not until they were informed the following year that they had lost their right to lop were their eyes opened to the fact that their entertainer had been an enemy.

What occurred in the way of vengeance is not recorded by the Pigbone historian.

Encouraged by the success of the Waltham lord, he of Loughton tried a similar ruse. But in spite of supper and good cheer, the men of Loughton, with a few exceptions, failed to respond in the abandoned manner of their Waltham neighbours. They feasted and drank, but did not forget that the wood claimed them at twelve o'clock. The more vigilant among them had brought their axes to the supper room, which was as well, under the circumstances, for when they rose from the table they found that the doors and even the windows had been securely barred against them. No time was to be lost. The newly sharpened axes were swung aloft a quarter of an hour earlier that night, but doors, not branches, went down beneath the crashing blows; furniture was reduced to wreckage; and the triumphant Loughtonians rushed into the forest with an exultant shout, leaving their discomfited lord to extricate himself from the *débris* of the supper table, and chew the cud of bitter reflection.

The lord of the manor of Epping was more diplomatic, and ultimately obtained his object by more subtle means. He approached the loppers of his manor as their friend, and offered to cut their wood for them and have it delivered at their homes. Not a single lopper among them appears to have

scented any danger to their time-honoured privilege, and they accepted their lord's proposal, and expressed their gratitude. For a few years their wood was duly lopped, carted, and delivered. Then came the awakening. Their lord refused to cut again, and the men of Epping recognised with dismay the trap into which they had fallen.

Whether the lords of other forest manors were successful plotters or no, it so happened that the greater number of forest vills had either lost, or had ceased to exercise, their rights of lopping at the time of the Royal Commissioners' inquiry in the eighteen-seventies, for, at that time, Loughton and Theydon Bois alone retained the ancient right to firewood from the forest.

When the Commissioners of Woods and Forests sold the crown's forestal rights in Epping Forest to many of the manorial lords, the old, old lopping rights of the commoners were taken from them, and but little attempt made to compensate the men for their loss. The lords of the manors regarded the timber as theirs, and further considered themselves entitled under the terms of the agreement to enclose the woodlands and exclude the forest dwellers. In this dilemma certain labourers determined to make a stand in support of the lopping privilege which their forefathers had enjoyed from a remote antiquity. By a strange coincidence the names of the leaders were Shillibeer and Willingale. The

latter became involved in a legal action brought by the lord of the manor against Willingale for trespass and theft, because he boldly continued to lop. Fortunately for him, and for the fate of the forest, the legality of his action was claimed by the "Commons Preservation Society," which championed his cause. A counter action was brought against the lord of the manor by one Castell, but neither case was ever brought to a decision. Years went by, and meantime Willingale died, but the stand thus made in support of ancient forest privileges formed the preliminary skirmish to that great legal battle which ended in the total defeat of the lords of the forest manors by the corporation of the city of London, and resulted in the remnant of the once great forest of Essex becoming London's Forest, and the playground of its millions.

According to the scheme of arbitration conducted by Lord Hobhouse, over £8000 was paid as compensation and costs to the inhabitants of Loughton in settlement of their claim, and the extinction of their ancient lopping right. £1000 was distributed among the cottagers, the Lopping Endowment Charity was formed, and the Lopping Hall built as a memento of old custom.

Indignation is occasionally aroused in the breasts of visitors by the sight of felled trees in the forest; but all true forest lovers will admit, in fairness to the conservators, that such fellings result in more

effective views being obtained, not only of the forest glades, but of the surrounding country. The work of the corporation of London in this respect is for the ultimate improvement of the best woods, and is a good work.

For centuries the city of London have had the right by royal charter to eighteen bucks and as many does from the royal forests of England, and the gifts continued ungrudgingly until George the Fourth ascended the throne. That so-called "first gentleman in Europe" questioned the city's right to venison, but gave way in face of substantial evidence, and the gifts continued till a half-century since, when the number (thirty-six) was reduced to twenty-four by reason of the decrease of deer in the kingdom. From the forest of Waltham a fat buck was ordered by warrant on July 13 and October 4, and the fulfilment of the order duly entered in old forest accounts thus: "A buke scleyn for the meir of London."

The Essex deer—the red deer especially—were always highly esteemed, and Camden praised them as "the largest and fattest deer in the kingdom," while John Norden noted in his *Survey* that the forest was "well replenished with deere, red and fallow, whoe seeme noe good neighbours to the foreste inhabytantes, but the kindness which they receyve of the forest may worke their patience towardes the game."

In this last hope, Norden was over sanguine; for the feeling had grown steadily since the Civil Wars that "The Kinges Majesties Woodes" and "The wilde Beastes of the Lord the King" were an ever-increasing royal nuisance. The rights of common of pasture, estovers, turbary, piscary, fuel and fernery, lopping and topping trees and bushes, made but a small return for the losses sustained by the depredations of the deer among the crops. The lord of the manor of Woodford erected fences round his arable land in the hope of abating the nuisance, but as fences were illegal, his action was condemned. In justification to himself and his tenants, he explained that for the past ten years he had been unable to plough and sow because of the increase of deer which fed upon the fallow land, now run to sweet pasture; while he was still required to pay compensation wheat and oats to the king's household, for having cultivated forest soil.

The beasts of the forest were divided by Master William Twici, huntsman to King Edward II., into three classes. Those which afforded "hunting"—the hart, boar, wolf and hare; those which were "beasts of chase"—the buck, doe, roe, fox and martin, and those classed as "affordynge greate dysporte"—the badger, otter, and wild cat. A more general division placed all forest animals under two heads. Those of "sweet flight"—the larger beasts of the deer family and the bear; and

those of "stinking flight"—the lesser creatures of the cat, fox, and weasel families.

Man, who hunted the forest animals, was easily placed under four heads. The monarch and members of the royal family; the nobility; the freeholders of forest soil, and the commoners. The king, of course, hunted at will, but according to the injunctions entered upon an ancient Forest Roll of pre-Reformation date, noblemen might hunt "at ther peryll accordyng as the Kyng's lawes wyll suffer them," and the keepers had instructions to "make them suche sport as it apperteynyth to a noble man," such hunting to be duly reported at the next Swainmote. The following report by the woodward of Stapleford Abbots is thus quaintly worded: "*My lord William of Devonshire*" (William Courtney, Earl of Devon, who died in 1509), "*hont on Seint Nicolas day. Killed a pricket and a sowrell. Also I was yn jeoparde of my lyf folowyng the same sewte. God save the King.*" The freeholders could "take disport for the kyllynge of the fee deer," to which they were entitled, when such deer could be "moste conveny-ently sparyd by the outsyght and discrecion" of either the lieutenant, riding forester, or ranger, who were to superintend the hunting of fee deer; while to promote "frend-schyppe and amytie" between the officers and the commoners, every keeper was permitted to "serve his warrant or commandment"

upon "his neyburs or borderers to assyst hym to hunt."

As offences against both vert and venison were of frequent occurrence, the keepers challenged all who wandered from the public way, whether from intent or by accident. If the wanderer declared by oath upon his weapons that he was really ignorant of having trespassed, he was conducted to the highway and directed towards his destination. If, however, being a poacher, he refused to stand and deliver himself, or used his weapons to escape capture, the keepers were held blameless if he were killed in the struggle, or shot while attempting to escape.

In the olden time, offenders against the king's deer were punished rigorously. Even after death and mutilation were abolished, heavy fines, or imprisonment and banishment were imposed in their stead. He who failed to find securities after an imprisonment of a year and a day, was forced to pronounce sentence against himself. Solemnly declaring upon oath his agreement to quit the kingdom, he thus addressed the crown's officer: "Master Crowner, heere you this!—I have offended our Soveraigne Lord the King in his venison; for which cause I abjure this Realme of England, and hereafter I shall never return into it again without the leave of our Soveraigne Lord the King. So God help me and those holy saints."

The more vigilant the keepers, the more frequent became the conflicts between them and the poachers. In the reign of Elizabeth some men were interrupted in the act of chasing a deer, and charged, "In God His name and the Queens to stand!" but they, disregarding both divine and queenly authority, attacked the keepers. One of them "did alight of his horse, and maintaininge his mastief upon the keap's man, with a bill did very sore hurt him."

When King James ordered a return to severities after the easier administration of his illustrious predecessor, he did so because of the number of "deare shott with gunnes and bowes" that his officers reported. Guns or crossbows were not allowed to any except the lieutenant of the forest, and the house of any one suspected of keeping a cross-bow was searched by the keeper of the "Walk" with either a verderer, or the constable of the parish. If the bow were found it was delivered to the clerk of the Swainmote, and the offender suitably punished.

In spite of all precautions poaching continued, and many a fat buck found its way under cover of the darkness to the forest cottages, where the body was hidden in a cellar beneath the floor of the living room or other suitable secret place. Therefore hunting by night was made illegal even to the forest officers, unless a wounded beast were tracked to

prevent the loss of the body. The carcase of a deer killed by misadventure was sent to the king if the flesh were good, and the opportunity favourable; if not, the venison was distributed at the discretion of the lieutenant of the forest, the poor on one occasion receiving a "doe found dead of the rotte."

The capture of a poacher "taken in the manner," as it was termed, came under one of four technical headings. "Back-bare"—the most evident proof of poaching, because the venison was on the man's back; "bloody-hand"—the condition of a poacher's hands to prove his guilt; "dog-draw"—the "drawing" after a wounded beast with a hound; and "Stable-stand"—the poacher's attitude, weapon in hand, behind tree or covert.

All forest dwellers were required upon oath to assist the keepers to detect poachers. The oath, however, though serious enough in itself, was interpreted charitably, and its injunctions allowed a wide latitude. It ran as follows:—

"You shall true liege man be
Unto the Kings Majesty.
Unto the beasts of the forest you shall no hurt do
Nor to anything that doth belong thereunto.
The offences of others you shall not conceal,
But to the utmost of your power you shall them reveal
Unto the officers of the forest,
Or to them who may see them redrest.
All these things you shall see done
So help you God at His Holy Doom."

The corporation of the city of London, in their office as Conservators of the Forest, decided that the deer were too numerous, and it was agreed to shoot some. Apart from the wisdom or otherwise of such a proceeding, an excellent opportunity to indulge in sport presented itself. The old-time Easter chase had passed into history, the meetings held by the Roundings of Woodford had ceased, but the corporation were now enabled to revive to some extent the civic hunts of former days. The general public were not, however, as heretofore invited. The meetings were not advertised, but kept secret and held on no specified dates. Private invitations were sent to certain selected city men, who met not to hunt, but to stalk.

History is a little unkind, perhaps, to the Cockney sportsman of the nineteenth century, but without doubt he failed as lamentably as a shot as he had as a hunter. A second Thomas Hood or a D'Urfey would have culled from his failings much material for a humorous pen. A story is told of an over-eager sportsman who in his zeal shot a donkey in mistake for a deer. The animal was grazing in the forest, and, startled by the beaters, trotted within the zone of fire. A Londoner, mistaking him for a lord of the herd in advance, and burning to distinguish himself, fired. His quarry fell, and he ran eagerly to the spot. Instead of a deer with antlered head he found poor hapless Neddy. To add to his

confusion the owner arrived, irate and eloquent. Generous compensation was needed to appease him, and the would-be hero became the butt of ridicule instead of the centre of admiration.

The risks of shooting stray animals, or even members of their own party, were no deterrent to those who coveted an entrance into the select circle of the deer-stalkers. That envied position was not, however, without its discomforts. The sport demanded that its devotees should rise betimes, stand at an assigned spot in the early morning haze, separated from companions, while the unaccustomed solitude of the forest and the demands made upon their patience chilled by degrees their previous enthusiasm, producing a nervous expectancy unknown in the turmoil of city life.

A timid individual, on one such occasion, nearly came to grief. The forest, for him, was full of weird sounds, which so wrought upon his fancy that, when the shouts of the beaters rent the air, he saw in imagination a herd of trampling, roaring deer. Filled with dismay, he rushed down the line of guns and was nearly shot in mistake for a bounding buck.

Naturally such sportsmen inflicted much unnecessary suffering upon the deer, whose cause was at length vigorously championed by the Press of the day. The methods of the conservators were de-

nounced as unnatural by *The Standard*, which refused to find any excuse for the use of the gun. "Still less excusable," ran the article, "is the turning loose of a horde of unskilful and indiscriminating men with guns to let fly wildly in all directions, against the plainest words and most stringent provisions of the bye-laws, and even to the danger of the public," while worst of all in *The Standard's* opinion was the "barbarity" which permitted wounded bird and beast, even the deer, "to creep away and die in lingering agony."

The accusation was just. There were known cases of deer found dead in quiet spots, which caused Mr. "Punch" to protest against the cruelty, and the following pathetic complaint appeared under the guise of a letter from "A Forest Fawn."

"I want to thank you, dear Mr. Punch, for what you have said on our behalf. Things have gone very hard with us. We felt they were really beyond a joke. For hundreds and hundreds of years we Fallow Deer have had free range of Epping Forest. When the ancient Britons were mere beginners we were here. Since time was the forest has been 'fallow' ground, what is happening to us now no fallow can understand.

"Dear Mr. Punch, we are not being killed, that would be merciful, and we are but venison. At

the civic 'hunts' you have heard about, we are literally tortured to death. Does the thing your city call its corporation possess bowels of compassion? If it is not quite callous to the agony inflicted in its name, it will stop once and for ever the ghastly sport of the past season.

"My sire lies rotting in the forest. Flying one morning last September before a band of yelling beaters, one of his legs was smashed below the knee by a Cockney 'Sportsman's' chance shot. My lamed sire made for a near brook flowing through a dark hollow in the wood. Here at night we came to him. The ball had smashed the bone to splinters. At first he crept from place to place along the brook, leaving a track of blood. Then as the wound grew worse he lay in the deepest water and died on the fifth day. Some nights after this when we came we found the body. I wish some city 'buck' could be made to endure a tithe of my sire's sufferings."

The vigorous denunciations of the Press had the desired effect. "Bowels of compassion" were possessed by the city's corporation, the annual meeting was discontinued, and with its decease died the last remnant of civic sport in the ancient forest of Essex.

Mr. Punch errs a trifle when he places fallow deer in the forest in the days of the Britons. Such a distinction cannot be accorded them, for it is

generally believed that they were introduced into England considerably after the Roman period and possibly after the Saxon invasion, for their bones are not found among fossil beds where the remains of the red and the roe deer abound.

The fallow deer remaining in Epping Forest are considered by one of its verderers, Mr. Edward North Buxton, to be unique among the deer of England. "I call them unique," he writes in his *Guide*, "as, though the same breed are found in some parts of Scotland, I believe these to be the only representatives in England of the ancient deer. The herds of tame fallow deer which are preserved in so many parks throughout England differ completely from the forest breed." The former, he points out, are "every shade of colour from white and dun to black. The Epping Forest deer, on the contrary, show no such variation. They are all of a uniform dark brown which appears to be black, except when one is in very close proximity."

There are no red deer now in Epping Forest, and only once since the ancient herd were transferred to Windsor Forest has any attempt been made to restore them in their former haunts. The experiment then tried proved to be impracticable, for, since the forest is unenclosed in any way, the owners of the adjoining fields and gardens suffered

too severely from the damage done by the few red deer which were enlarged upon the forest some few

THE FALLOW DEER.

years ago, that it was found necessary to destroy them.

In the case of the roe deer, the importation of these animals to the forest was in every way suc-

cessful. In 1883, when wild roe deer had become nearly extinct in England, a few of those still inhabiting the woods of Dorsetshire were, by the generous consent of their owners, netted and set at liberty in the forest at Loughton.

The venture was due to the enterprise of Mr. Buxton of Knighton, Buckhurst Hill, a gentleman who has deservedly gained a reputation for being in the forefront of all movements to improve "London's Forest." A full account of the circumstances of the roe's introduction is given by him in his guide book—*Epping Forest*, by Edward North Buxton, Verderer—and his action thus ensured that those graceful little animals should still inhabit a district which they had roamed in the beginning of time.

The roe deer are not often seen in Epping Forest, for they prefer a greater seclusion than do the fallow deer, and have gradually moved northwards from Loughton in search of that solitude which they have found on the north side of the Epping Road and in the large private parks adjoining the northern forest boundary.

The fallow deer can be seen almost anywhere north of High Beach, especially in the woods of Loughton and Theydon Bois. They roam in groups of about five or more, except in the month of October, when a buck may be seen proudly escorting a score or so of does. Less than a century

ago the deer were to be seen in large numbers as far south as Leytonstone, but the forest land lying between Leytonstone and Chingford—a mere strip of land, at most half a mile in width—does not now afford sufficient cover for them.

Londoners and others who have failed to see the deer in Epping Forest, and harbour a secret belief that there are none, will learn with some surprise that a difficulty has been experienced in keeping the herd within reasonable numbers. A few years ago a reduction became imperative, and therefore an expert was entrusted with the work of netting some. Twenty-one were by this means so successfully caught that only three had to be killed, the rest were sent to grace the public parks of Manchester.

In London's Forest of to-day there are about one hundred and fifty fallow and fifty roe deer. This number of deer is considered sufficiently large for the forest to maintain, taking into consideration the public character of the forest, the rights of pasture for both horses and cows, the temptation to poachers, and the loss from strayed animals. To prevent the deer from roaming into private pasture and covert is an impossibility, and many fallow and roe deer are annually lost.

The vigilance of the forest keepers prevents the deer from being netted and caught by poachers within the forest bounds, though on private land

many animals are no doubt captured and killed, and while deer-stalking is now seldom indulged in, visitors to the forest may still delight—

"Like Robin Hood to feel themselves the free
And draw their *beaux* beneath the greenwood tree."

(*See* p. 136).

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